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JAMES HOGG

BY SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS

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PUBLISHED BY
OLIPHANT ANDERSON
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September 1899.

To

MRS GARDEN,

THE SURVIVING DAUGHTER OF THE

ETTRICK SHEPHERD,

WITH RESPECT AND FELLOW-FEELING.

NOTE

The scheme of the Series necessitates the inclusion, in one volume with this sketch of Hogg's life, of brief notices of the minor and more or less contemporary poets, Robert Tannahill, William Motherwell, and William Thom.

JAMES HOGG

INTRODUCTION

If there have been many greater poets than the Ettrick Shepherd, there have probably been few more closely associated with a particular district of the earth's surface, more racy of the soil from which they sprung. Herein, perhaps, lie Hogg's limitations; for, of course, he is local rather than universal, the poet of a class rather than of humanity, of an epoch rather than of the ages. But, accepting these limitations, herein also lies his strength. For there are few instances of the poetry of a particular people and locality being so completely incarnated in one man, and through him passing so directly into literature. Indeed, so essential is the connexion, that a glance at the locality in question, and at its condition a century ago, is indispensable ere we proceed to bring the poet himself upon the stage.

The shire of Selkirk, anciently known as Ettrick Forest, the Arcadia of Scotland and the hunting-ground of Scottish kings, is described by the gazetteer as 'forming part of the eastern declivity of that lofty ridge of mountains which from Northumberland penetrates northward into Clydesdale.' Its surface is but little diversified, appearing, indeed, to the spectator, now that the ancient wood has been removed, but as 'one assemblage of hills.' It is watered by two principal streams, which, flowing in a north-easterly direction and for some distance almost in parallel lines, unite to empty their waters into Tweed. These rivers are the Ettrick and that most tunefully besung

of rivulets, the Yarrow. The hills are generally rounded in outline and grassy; but at certain points—as on Minchmuir, or at the pass into Moffatdale—they become more rugged and barren, displaying lines which are more striking to the eye and grander. At Ettrick Pen and Blackhouse Heights they rise respectively to 2200 and 2370 feet above sea level. Excepting Selkirk and Galashiels on the eastern limit of the county, there are no towns; whilst the villages, few and scattered, might be more accurately described as hamlets. In modern times the character of the district is almost purely pastoral, the agricultural produce of the parish of Ettrick—a square of ten miles—being insufficient, according to the Statistical Account of 1792, for the maintenance of its 400 inhabitants. In 1801, the population of the entire county—an area of 169,000 acres—was but 5388. Of this wide, sparsely-peopled region, the ideal centre is the 'lone' Loch of St Mary.

On such a tract of country Time generally lays his hand but lightly, and to the casual observer its character at the present day may appear little modified by change. But it has in reality participated largely in modern improvements. Take, for instance, the item of roads. In 1792 the roads of Ettrick parish are described as 'almost impassable.' The only one that looks like a turnpike is that leading to Selkirk; 'but even it in many places is so deep as greatly to obstruct travelling. The distance is about sixteen miles and it requires four hours to ride it.' In time of snow, we are told that there was often no intercourse with the outside world for many months; whilst, when the waters were waxen, the want of bridges would often delay a traveller for hours.[1] All this is altered; nor, of course, does change end here. The country has been, in addition, thoroughly drained; the breed of sheep, and

[1] *Statistical Account of Scotland*, vol. iii. p. 297.

with that their management, has been improved. The building of *stells* and the stacking of bog hay now obviate the necessity of the shepherd's flight in severe weather for shelter and keep for his flocks to the low grounds of Annandale. The system of cropping has also been revolutionized, excellent buildings have taken the place of cottages of the older type, and the standard of living has in general greatly risen. Dress is no longer of home produce and manufacture. The solitary carrier, and the single newspaper which formerly passed from hand to hand throughout the valley, now belong to the domain of history. And, side by side with these things, many an old custom has passed away. The ewe-milking, the hog hirsel, the folding of the flocks at night, such picturesque and joyous old usages as those described in *The Shepherd's Wedding*—the *broose* for the napkin and the mell, the breaking of a short-cake over the bride's head as she enters her new home—all such have passed or are passing. But in the Forest such survivals lingered longer than elsewhere; and thus it was to Ettrick that Walter Scott, when collecting the old Border ballads, turned as to a happy hunting-ground. It was in Ettrick that the fairies were said to have made their last authenticated appearance to a mortal, choosing as the recipient of this signal favour the celebrated Will o' Phaup, the grandsire of the subject of this work.[1] It was in Ettrick also, and in Ettrick of the Shepherd's own day, that, certain young men having met together as members of a debating society, and having happened to hold their meeting upon a night which was signalized by one of the most terrific storms recorded in the locality, a report spread abroad that the debaters had raised the devil, who in his turn had raised the storm. Circumstantial detail was not wanting, His Satanic Majesty being said to have appeared in the form of a

[1] See Hogg's *Shepherd's Calendar*: 'Will o' Phaup.'

'great rough dog'; and it was long, we are assured, ere the persons implicated lived down the obloquy thus incurred.

Storms such as the above, the Shepherd tells us, would constitute the eras of the pastoral life: they were 'the red lines in the Shepherd's manual—the remembrancers of years and ages that are past,' standing 'in bloody capitals' athwart his uneventful annals. Such was that historic tempest in which the shepherds made use of the bodies of their perished sheep to build up huge semi-circular walls for the protection of the living remnant; or that in which no less than seventeen Border shepherds died in the snow, and upwards of thirty were borne senseless to their homes; or that, again, whose conclusion saw nigh upon two thousand carcasses deposited upon the Beds of Esk—the spot, that is, on Solway shore where the tide throws up what has been carried into it by the rivers. On such occasions a shepherd caring faithfully for his sheep would take his life in his hand as literally as does a soldier in presence of the enemy. There is a grave in Ettrick Churchyard—that of one who perished thus—which bears the touching epitaph, 'The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep'; and we do not wonder at Hogg's observation that the daily feeling impressed on the Scottish Shepherd's mind contributes not a little to that firm spirit of religious devotion by which he is so eminently characterized.

Thus, then, the century has brought its changes even to the secluded vales of Ettrick and Yarrow. And, among these changes, surely none is more remarkable than that by which one who a hundred years ago was an unknown shepherd on its hills has come to be recognized as the presiding genius of the district. For certainly the region had not wanted previously for association with picturesque or heroic characters either legendary or historic,—from

the robber 'King of the Borders,' whose ruined castle may be traced on Tushielaw, to the fair 'Flower of Yarrow'; from the Outlaw Murray to the Young Tamlane, the tragic combatants of the 'dowie dens,' the ill-fated lover of the 'Douglas Tragedy,' or the wonder-working occupant of the 'Jingler's' room in Aikwood Tower. But to-day the wide green solitudes of the Forest, with their countless fountains and their countless flocks, speak to us only in the second place of these phantoms of old time; for a nearer, warmer and more human presence dispossesses them—a presence, which, pervading the whole district, haunts especially the wilds of Blackhouse, the lowlands of Altrive and of Mount Benger, and the sequestered Churchyard of Ettrick. It is the presence of one of the most original, most self-reliant and most kindly of Scotland's many gifted peasant sons, who was also the unrivalled teller of the twilight tale of bogle, wraith or fairy, and the deviser of pastoral melodies

> 'More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,
> When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.'

CHAPTER I

THE precise date of the Ettrick Shepherd's birth remains unknown. He himself fixed it on the 25th January (the birthday of Burns) in the year 1772; but he was notoriously inaccurate in regard to figures, and the record of his baptism on December 9th, 1770, which is preserved in the Kirk Session Records of Ettrick, shows it to have taken place at least some fourteen months earlier, supposing, as is probable from the fact of his birthplace being close to the church, that he was baptized early. A drawing by the artist D. O. Hill represents that birthplace as a diminutive, picturesquely situated cottage, of the old 'clay and strae' type, which has now almost been driven out before buildings of stone and slate.

James Hogg was the second of four sons of Robert Hogg, a shepherd, who, having saved some money, had taken a lease of the farms of Ettrickhouse and Ettrickhall. Hogg the elder is described as a man of quite ordinary understanding; but his wife, Margaret Laidlaw, was remarkable not only for spirit and activity, but as a noted repository of ballad, legend, tradition, and the countless minor what-nots of rustic lore, so that probably the annals of genius—prolific as in this respect they are—present few more plausible instances of the influence of a notable mother upon a gifted son.

Though occupying a modest grade in the social scale, the Hoggs were of old and respectable family. Veitch, indeed, remarks that though Scott laid claim to gentle blood and prided himself upon it more than was neces-

sary, James Hogg had probably as good a claim as he, notwithstanding the fact that his immediate ancestors had fallen socially lower than those of Scott. The Hoggs are said to have claimed descent from Haug, a more or less mythic Viking. At the least, the existence of a marked Scandinavian element among the inhabitants of the Border hill-country has been attested by such writers as Veitch and the author of *The Border Elliots*,[1] of whom the former believes that light may thence be thrown on the origin of the poet's genius. But, interesting as his theory is, it involves matters altogether too remote and problematical to be accepted without great reserve, whilst it must be admitted that the task of ac-

[1] p. 10. Veitch thinks it probable that, as far back as the ninth century, Norwegian settlers spread northward from Cumberland and Dumfries, penetrating, 'apparently by the vales of the Liddel and the Esk, to the watershed of the Cheviots, and to the heights about the head of Ettrick.' They also, thinks he, found their way up Annandale, and diverging by the Moffat Water to the east, passed into the vales of the Yarrow, and even of the southern feeders of the Tweed. He goes on to quote from Worsaae's *Danes in England* a description of the fair Norse type noticed by that writer in the north of England, adding that, had Worsaae visited the hills about Ettrick and Yarrow, he would have found there 'as perfect types of the fair or Norwegian blood as any to be met with in the north of England.' 'In the beginning of this century,' he continues, with some looseness, for Hogg was thirty in 1801, 'there might have been seen any day on the braes of Yarrow a shepherd-lad with features, hair, and frame of body as like Worsaae's description of the typical Scandinavian as could well be found. In him, too, there were thrilling ideals and weird imaginings, such as might have moved in the heart of any *Skald*; and he bore a name which might very fairly be regarded as indicating the Norwegian blood; for the Ettrick Shepherd was not named from the *hog* of the hillside, but from the *haug* or *haig* of the old northern tongue, as the lairds of Bemerside carried it honourably through the long centuries of Scottish story. (*History and Poetry of the Scottish Border*, vol. i. pp. 83, 84; 87, 88.)

counting for nature's marvels is at best an unsatisfactory one, with a general tendency to end in 'arguing in a circle.' Suffice it, then, here to say that the tale of the Norwegian origin of his family appealed to Hogg himself at least in so far as to lead him to celebrate his supposed Viking ancestor in the poem of the *Pilgrims of the Sun.*

Coming further down in the centuries, Hogg's ancestors —to quote his own account of the matter—were vassals, under the Scotts of Harden, on the lands of Fauldshope, about four miles south-west of Selkirk. This feudal connection lasted more than two centuries, only ending with a change of proprietors,[1] whilst its closeness is expressed in the moss-trooping rhyme—

> 'If ye reive the Hoggs of Fauldshope,
> Ye harry Harden's gear.'

The Hoggs are also said to have held under the lairds of Oakwood—once, according to tradition, a residence of the 'Wizard' Michael Scot. Readers of Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* will remember the legend of a trial of strength between the Witch of Fauldshope and her neighbour of Oakwood;[2] but Hogg, who certainly had a taste for ornamental genealogy-making, claims to have had *several* witches among his ancestresses. A far more solid and real personage is his maternal grandfather, William Laidlaw, whose tombstone, erected by his famous grandson in Ettrick Churchyard, records him as 'the far-famed Will o' Phaup, who for feats of frolic, agility, and strength, had no equal in his day.' On the same stone the place and date of birth of the poet's father are given as Bowhill, 1720; those of his mother as Old Overphaup, 1730. The former lived to the age of 92; the latter to 82. Well! we are all of old descent, but it is only those

[1] *Domestic Manners of Sir Walter Scott*, p. 20.

[2] See Note Y to the poem.

among us who happen to be rich who have opportunities of substantiating the fact. At the lowest estimate, Hogg's lineage was a thing to be proud of, for it is beyond dispute that he was sprung of peasants of sound physical constitution and of honourable life. His earlier progenitors had, at least for many a day, been all shepherds of the country-side.

We have already seen that the poet's father had raised himself from the degree of shepherd to that of sheep-farmer. For a time he drove large flocks to market on both sides the Border. But his position must have been at all times somewhat of an anxious one, and a heavy fall in prices, coupled with the absconding of his principal creditor, reduced him in a few years to bankruptcy. He was 'rouped,' and with his family turned out of doors, and but for the firm friendship of a neighbour, Mr Brydon of Crosslee, things had gone hardly with them. This gentleman, however, intervened by taking a lease of Ettrickhall and placing the late farmer there as shepherd, thus giving him the means of supporting his family. Mr Brydon's kindness was gratefully commemorated long afterwards in one of the poems of the 'Ettrick Shepherd's' first volume.

The elder Hogg's reverses, happening before his gifted son had reached the age of six, seriously interfered with the boy's education. The fortunate accident that there was a school close to his father's door had enabled the child already to secure a short period of tuition, during which he had advanced to the head of a juvenile class who read the Shorter Catechism and the Book of Proverbs. But, at the Whitsunday following his father's failure, pressure of circumstance set young James, still in his seventh year, to the task of herding a few cows for a neighbouring farmer—a service for which he received the half-year's wage of a ewe-lamb and a pair of shoes. During the following winter-quarter he was again at school, where

he received his first lessons in writing. And here, once and for all, his academic education terminated: whatever else he learnt was studied in the school of the world, and under that best of all possible masters—so he be willing for the task—himself.

Many years afterwards, as a young man, having occasion to send a note to his brother, he discovered that he had forgotten how to form some of the letters of the alphabet, which he was thus compelled to copy from a printed book. Meantime his own particular bent of fancy drew its sole nourishment from his mother, who (as his brother William has recorded) would often keep her boys quiet, while she got forward with her household work, by telling them stories of kings, giants, knights, fairies, kelpies and brownies. She also tuned their ears to metre by repeating to them the metrical psalms, which she in turn made them repeat to her. Whilst he was herding cows, little James found his favourite recreation in running races against time upon the green hillsides of Ettrick, and as he would often strip to the skin for this exercise, and on one occasion lost plaid, bonnet, coat and hosen, he must at times have appeared quite literally in the character of a child of nature.

After continuing for some years in that humblest of all occupations of rural life, he was at length promoted to keep sheep. But ere this time, and whilst still at the tender age of eight, he assures us that he had already known the influence of the gentle passion. The story, told in his own words, will bear comparison with the pleasing idyll of the first love of Robert Burns:—'That summer,' as he writes in his Autobiography, 'I was sent out to a height called Broad-heads with a rosy-cheeked maiden to herd a flock of new-weaned lambs, and I had my mischievous cows to herd besides. But, as she had no dog and I had an excellent one, I was ordered to

keep close by her. Never was a master's order better obeyed. Day after day I herded the cows and the lambs both, and Betty had nothing to do but to sit and sew. Then we dined together every day at a well near to the Shielsike head, and after dinner I laid my head down on her lap, covered her bare feet with my plaid, and pretended to fall sound asleep. One day I heard her say to herself, "Poor little laddie! he's juist tired to death," and then I wept till I was afraid she would feel the warm tears trickling on her knee. I wished my master, who was a handsome young man, would fall in love with her and marry her, wondering how he could be so blind and stupid as not to do it. But I thought if I were he, I would know well what to do.'

By the time he was fifteen, young James had served under a dozen masters; but, lest the frequent changes implied by this fact be imputed to him for blame, he tells us that these were due to growing strength and powers, which kept ever fitting him for superior employments. He adds that no one of his masters ever refused him a recommendation; and that, in recommending him, they were wont to touch especially upon the inoffensiveness of his character—a distinction which he claims to have retained as long as he remained in service. On the other hand, the usage which he received from certain of his masters was hard,—under one shepherd in particular he complains of being often well-nigh exhausted by labour and famished for want. All this we can believe from experiences recounted to ourselves by persons who have served in a like capacity —experiences, it may be, of little acts of rigour, or of generosity withheld, which to a lad make all the difference at the time. And yet it is undeniable that, under such discipline, buirdly chiels and clever hizzies were bred up. His pittance of wage he would carry at once to his parents, who in turn supplied his clothes. But these were often

extremely ragged—his shirts, of which he had generally but two, hanging down 'in long tassels' to his heels, whilst his trews displayed a tendency to start away from his upper garment. At this time his bed was invariably made in stables and cow-houses.

During all these years he wrote not at all, and read in no book save the Bible, of which his favourite portion was the Psalms, most of which he got by heart. At fifteen years of age he invested five shillings, saved from his wages, in the purchase of a fiddle, which henceforth afforded his favourite amusement. His hours of practice were, perforce, when the day's work was over, but sleeping as he did in the stable-loft, he needed to be under no apprehension lest his nocturnes should prove a nuisance to his neighbours,—his sole hearers, like those of the inspired Galwegian, Nicholson on a memorable occasion, being four-footed. One night, however, while he was serving with a Mr Scott of Singlee, there had been a party at the farm-house, at which Hogg, who had been admitted as a spectator, had been much 'taken up' with the dance-music. On retiring to his loft, he was loth to close an eye before trying over on his own account some of the tunes to which he had listened. Whilst he was thus engaged, the authorized fiddler, happening to come out of the house, was surprised to hear his tunes repeated, he guessed not by whom. His brain was probably somewhat heated, for he at first inclined to believe that the music of an hour before still beat in his head. But becoming assured of the reality of the sounds, whilst wholly at a loss to account for their existence in the wilderness, he believed himself a dupe of the devil, and fled wildly back into the hall, where his disordered appearance and attire evoked mirth and an explanation. This anecdote, told by the Shepherd himself, shows us that in the Forest of a century ago the devil had not yet parted with his power to terrify.

On leaving Singlee, he took service with a Mr Laidlaw at Elibank, on the Tweed below Innerleithen, on which farm he performed a man's work—thrashing, driving horses and the like—and in consequence found life pleasanter than heretofore. He remained there three half-years—a term longer than usual, and then passed into the employment of his late master's father, at Willanslee, in the parish of Innerleithen, where he stayed two years. The young man had now entered upon the calling which in his family might be regarded as hereditary, and the surroundings amid which he exercised it were ideally pastoral; for the old farm-house of 'sweet Willanslee,' as it is called by the author of *Young Randal*, is placed at the base of hills high and wide-spreading, green and secluded, freshened by many streamlets which discharge their waters into Leithen. Here the youthful shepherd's means of mental development, though still sadly scanty, were less painfully stinted than before. Here he first read, and grew 'immoderately fond' of, *The Gentle Shepherd*, and Blind Harry's *Wallace*, in the version of Hamilton of Gilbertfield. But the immense difficulties by which his studies were attended may be judged from the fact that, having nearly lost the little knowledge of reading he had once possessed, the Scots dialect 'quite confounded' him; and that, much addicted to rhyming as he was later to become, he would often wish that these books had been written in prose, or at least in the metre of the Psalms, that they might be with less fatigue understood. He read so slowly as generally to have lost one rhyme before he came to the next, whilst a triplet was quite too much for him, leading him to conclude that the poet—at end of his resources as such—had lapsed willy-nilly into prose. Sometimes he was less fortunate in the books which fell into his hands—among which, Bishop Burnet's *Theory of the Earth's Conflagration*, lent

him by his master's wife, as he says almost turned his brain. All day he pondered on the millennium, and all night dreamed of the stars in horror and the world in flames. The same lady would also lend him an occasional newspaper, which he used to peruse straight through, from headline to printer's name, being often but little wiser at the end. His was, in fact, an extreme instance of the old story of the pursuit of Knowledge under difficulties, and its details would be infinitely pathetic, did not one recall the cheering fact that difficulties are often good for us, and that what has been overcome in the face of difficulty is all the more surely and irrevocably won. It was at this time that he became aware of having forgotten how to write correctly. But, even at a considerably later period, he never sat down to commit a song to paper without first removing his coat and waistcoat, as if for some unusual exertion; whilst the rapid cramping of his wrist prevented his writing more than some four to six lines at a sitting.

At Whitsunday 1790, when in his twentieth year and still striving to improve his condition, young Hogg left Willanslee, and engaged with a distant cousin of his mother's—a Mr Laidlaw of Blackhouse, on the Douglas burn in Yarrow, whose farm was to be his home for the next ten years. Here he found more of mental stimulus than before, and his mind developed more freely. In the first place, the kindness of his employer was, as he says, more that of a father than of a master; and in that employer's son, William Laidlaw—now known to fame as the author of *Lucy's Flitting*, and to history as the trusted, loved amanuensis of Sir Walter Scott—he found that greatest of all treasures to a young poet, a sympathetic and appreciative friend. For, long after he had overcome the early difficulties of scholarship, Hogg had to contend against deaf irresponsiveness on the part of all

around him—of all, that is, save Laidlaw, whose generous belief sustained and supported him, giving reality to the first out-pourings of his muse. For a song has no true birth in the world of realities till it reaches the ear and heart of some sympathetic hearer.

In the second place, the young student had access to the valuable collection of books belonging to his employer, which included the works of Milton, Pope, Thomson and Young, and to the study of which he now applied himself, with the result that he soon began to wish to compose upon his own account. His first serious attempt to write verse was not made until 1793[1]—in spring, the song-season of the year. But his 'low preamble' had in it nothing of nature's spontaneity, for, by his own description, it consisted of a laboured and fulsome epistle, abounding in lines and phrases which were borrowed from Dryden's *Virgil* and Harvey's *Life of Bruce*, and addressed to a divinity student of his acquaintance. The first rhymes he composed which were really his own were entitled *An Address to the Duke of Buccleuch, in beha'f o' mysel' and ither poor Fock*, which, after a world of pains, he followed up, in the same year, with a song called *The Way that the World goes on*, and an eclogue—*Wattie and Geordie's Foreign Intelligence.* These, together, made up a year's work; but, as, once started, the poet continued to write upon every occasion—a conversation with a havering old woman from Lochaber of itself sufficing to suggest a ballad and a 'pastoral in four parts'—his compositions now multiplied rapidly. He was at no time addicted to self-depreciation, and as he frankly characterizes these early productions as 'miserably bad,' we need the less regret their disappearance. In 1795 he began *The Scotch Gentleman*, a comedy in five long acts, sug-

[1] Memoir prefixed to *The Mountain Bard*, p. xi.

gested by the trial of some fishers for a breach of the fishing-laws, at which he had himself been called as a witness. This was, at any rate, in advance of its time in being 'realistic,' and founded upon 'documents,' to the extent of reproducing word for word many of the questions asked and answers given in Court; and, whatever its merits, he tells us that at least it never failed, when read aloud, to set an Ettrick audience in a roar, though whether they laughed with the author or at him he professes to be uncertain.

Much more interesting, however, than the record of these crude beginnings is the picture of the shepherd-poet at his work. His apparatus was of his own devising. Having folded and stitched together a few sheets of paper, he suspended from a buttonhole of his waistcoat a small phial of ink, having the cork attached by a string, and thus equipt went about his pastoral duties, seizing every moment he could spare from the care of his flock for poetical pursuits. Throw in as background to this figure the still summer air and the wide solitary world of hills, soothing the eye with verdure and soft hazes, the ear with bleating of far-off flocks and trickling of hidden streams, and the picture grows as impressive, and for the Border Scot as classic, as that of the young Hesiod keeping his flocks upon the slopes of Helicon, or any other whatever in the realm of literature.

It must not be assumed, however, that, even in the narrow world in which his lot was cast, young Hogg's communings with the Muse were altogether singular. The association of the pastoral life with poetry is no mere fiction or convention of Poetics; and the present writer has been informed by one whose business as a wool-buyer took him, forty or fifty years ago, much into the outlying districts of Tynedale and Liddesdale that, even at that date, it was not uncommon for shepherds to treat their guests to

specimens of the native skill in numbers.[1] The following incident, narrated by Hogg himself, shows that emulation in song was not unknown to him. 'In the spring of the year 1796,[2] as Alexander Laidlaw, a neighbouring shepherd, my brother William, and myself, were resting on the side of a hill above Ettrick Church, I happened, in the course of our conversation, to drop some hints of my superior talents in poetry. William said that, as to putting words into rhyme, it was a thing which he never could do to any sense; but that if I liked to enter the lists with him in blank verse, he would take me up for any bet that I pleased. Laidlaw declared that he would venture likewise. This being settled, and the judges named, I accepted the challenge.' Here are we, then, in the midst of Virgil's Third Eclogue. A dispute, however, arising as to the subject of this modern *Sängerstreit*, lots were cast, which determined the matter in favour of 'The Stars'—objects of which, as Hogg confesses, the rival poets knew little but that 'they were burning and twinkling over us, and to be seen every night when the clouds were away.' Hogg set to work with enthusiasm, and had his poem ready in a week. Laidlaw

[1] Alas, that universal locomotion, together with the influence of a too practical age, have dealt the death-blow to a charming collocation! At the Annual Dinner of Border Shepherds, held at Yetholm in the Cheviots, the eye is still satisfied by the sight of as fine a gathering of men and dogs as could be desired. But there is no longer any thought of native inspiration; the songs sung after dinner are of the type familiar in more vulgar localities, and known as 'songs of the day.' Even the old ballads are neglected, and if one would hear them sung—as they should be sung—to the old music, one must cultivate the acquaintance of a yet shyer and less sophisticated set of men—to wit, the fishermen of the smaller fishing-towns.

[2] The date is taken from the edition of the *Autobiography* published in 1807. The edition of 1832 puts the event two years later. The matter is unimportant, but is pointed out as one of several discrepancies.

followed a week later, but the dilatoriness of Alexander Hogg delayed the judgment a half-year. Even then his composition was presented in an unfinished state, but, though the matter was never properly adjudged, the balance of opinion inclined to award him the prize. In Hogg's opinion, besides being in bad measure the poem was often bombastical, yet in the sublimity of its ideas it was far superior to either of the others. It was entitled *Urania's Tour*, whilst that of Laidlaw was *Astronomical Thoughts*, and Hogg's *Reflections on a View of the Nocturnal Heavens*. It is easy to smile over these somewhat heavy-handed endeavours after self-culture, but the smile of the reader who bears the attending circumstances in mind will be at least innocent of derision. After this Hogg tried his hand again against Laidlaw, in a metrical version of the 117th Psalm.

Besides these poetical contests, the young men named above, with the addition of Hogg's elder brother, William, and a few others, had formed together a species of literary society, for the purpose of reading essays and discussing them. In the paper on 'Storms' in his *Shepherd's Calendar*, the Ettrick Shepherd has left a graphic account of his own endeavour, on the eve of a great snow-storm, to make his way across the hills to Entertony, nearly twenty miles from Blackhouse, where one of these meetings was to be held. Though most anxious to communicate a bombastic essay which he carried in his pocket, his endeavour had finally to be abandoned.

These were the halcyon days of James Hogg's life. And think not, reader, that the hard-handed son of toil is of necessity a stranger to the 'deep Sabbath of meek self-content,' or to the highest thought. A few years later, another young Border shepherd, Henry Scott Riddell, who afterwards became a friend of Hogg, kept sheep within the neighbouring district of Buccleuch. Let

me transcribe as typical the passage in which he has painted the feelings and fancies of a thoughtful and poetic shepherd who spends his days alone with nature:—

'Owing to the nature of the stock kept on the farm, it was my destiny day after day to be out among the mountains during the whole summer season from early morn till the fall of even. But the long summer days, whether clear or cloudy, never seemed long to me—I never wearied among the wilds. My flocks being *hirsled* [divided into classes] required vigilance; but, if this was judiciously maintained, the task was for the most part an easy and pleasant one. I know not if it be worth while to mention that the hills and glens on which my charge pastured at this period formed a portion of what in ancient times was termed the Forest of Rankleburn. The names of places in the district, though there were no other more intelligible traditions, might serve to show that it is a range of country to which both kings and nobles had resorted. If from morning to night I was away far from the homes of living men, I was not so in regard to those of the dead. Where a lesser stream from the wild uplands comes down and meets the Rankleburn, a church or chapel once stood, surrounded, like most other consecrated places of the kind, by a burial-ground. There tradition says that five dukes, some say kings, lie buried under a marble stone. I had heard that Sir Walter, then Mr Scott, had, a number of years previously, made a pilgrimage to this place, for the purpose of discovering the sepulchres of the great and nearly forgotten dead, but without success. This, however, tended, in my estimation, to confirm the truth of the tradition; and having enough of time and opportunity, I made many a toilsome effort of a similar nature, with the same result. With hills around, wild and rarely trodden, and the ceaseless yet ever-varying tinkling of its streams, together with the

mysterious echoes which the least stir seemed to awaken, the place was not only lonely, but also creative of strange apprehensions, even in the hours of open day. It is strange that the heart will fear the dead, which, perhaps, never feared the living. Though I could muster and maintain courage to dig perseveringly among the dust of the long-departed when the sun shone in the sky, yet when the shadow of night was coming, or had come down upon the earth, the scene was sacredly secure from all inroad on my part.'

Among scenes and surroundings similar to these it was that the Ettrick Shepherd drank in those powers which were afterwards to make him an unrivalled master of the weird, or eerie, in literature. Nor were his own particular surroundings lacking in traditions of their own—the farm of Blackhouse being itself the reputed scene of the elopement of the beautiful lady Margaret Douglas, with the pursuit, the slaying of her seven brothers, and the subsequent death of her lover, as related in the ballad of the *Douglas Tragedy*:—

'Lord William was dead lang ere midnight,
Lady Marg'ret lang ere day—
And all true lovers that go thegither,
May they have mair luck than they!

'Lord William was buried in St Marie's kirk,
Lady Margaret in Mary's quire,
Out o' the lady's grave grew a bonny red rose,
And out o' the knight's a briar.

'And they twa met, and they twa plat,
And fain they wad be near;
And a' the warld might ken right weel,
They were twa lovers dear.'

Not idly would appeal to an ear and eye such as the Shepherd's the music of these verses, or the daily sight of the ruined tower, the torrent in the wild and solitary

glen, the broken shrine, and the stones set up on the neighbouring moor to mark the spot where the brothers fell.

But, in order to complete the picture, it is necessary that we should know what manner of man the poet was outwardly; and, by good fortune, a pen portrait by his friend William Laidlaw exists to show us this :—'His face was fair, round, and ruddy, with big blue eyes that beamed with humour, gaiety, and glee. And he was not only then, but throughout his chequered life, blessed with strong health and the most exuberant animal spirits. His height was a little above the average size, his form at that period was of faultless symmetry, which nature had endowed with almost unequalled agility and swiftness of foot. His head was covered with a singular profusion of light brown hair, which he usually wore coiled up under his hat. When he used to enter church on Sunday, (of which he was at all times a regular attendant), after lifting his hat, he used to raise his right hand to his hair to assist a shake of his head, when his long hair fell over his loins [shoulders?], and every female eye at least was turned upon him, as with a light step he ascended to the gallery where he usually sat.'

It is now that we may suppose him to have reached that stage of early poetic maturity of which he tells us, when the lasses would sing his songs and ballads in chorus, whilst he tasted the pride and delight of hearing the 'rosy nymphs' chanting his 'uncouth strains,' and jeering him by the 'dear appellation of Jamie the Poeter.'

CHAPTER II

In the version of the Autobiography prefixed to his Altrive Tales (1832), the Ettrick Shepherd observes that readers who may desire to read about his youthful love-adventures will find 'some of the best' of them in those of George Cochrane, a character in the tales which follow. But, having thus whetted our curiosity, he fails to satisfy it; for, in the tales published, no character of that name appears. Failing health probably prevented the bringing out of a second volume of the series; but, at any rate, if the amours of George Cochrane were ever committed to paper, they did not see the daylight of publication. Those who incline to such exercises of the fancy may please themselves by believing that they detect some reminiscence of actual speech of Hogg's in the rather pretty passage of the *Noctes Ambrosianæ* (March 1827), where Wilson's ideal Shepherd, speaking of wells, adverts to one well in particular;—'ae spring there is—in a nook known but to me and anither, a bit nook greener than ony emerald—or even the Queen Fairy's symar, as she disentangles it frae her feet in the moonlight dance, enclosed wi' laigh broomy rocks, amaist like a sheep-fauld. . . .' This nook is introduced as the trysting-place in youth of Wilson's Daphnis and a Chloe whose age was but two months past fifteen,—'she had haply reached her full stature, and was somewhat taller than the maist o' our Forest lassies, yet you saw at once that she was still but a bairn.' The pure and tender affection of these young lovers who scarcely know themselves for

such is described in an idyllic passage, which is comparatively free from Wilson's characteristic timidity of style and slight sickliness of sentiment—a circumstance which might perhaps be made to favour the theory of a reminiscence of Hogg's conversation. But, however this may be, it certainly behoves us to remember that, as a general rule, it is not only misleading, but unjust to the real Shepherd, to confound him with his counterfeit presentment of the 'Nights at Ambrose's.' Before leaving the subject of the tender passion, we may add that the pastoral of *Willie and Keatie*, published in Hogg's first volume, is acknowledged by the author as being to some extent founded upon a love affair of his own.

Events, beyond those of mere personal experience, there had so far been few or none in young Hogg's life. The existence in the vale of Yarrow in which he bore his share was an existence apart—peaceful, secluded, self-contained, and almost cut off from the outer world. Almost, as yet not entirely; for in those days, as for long afterwards, the Border shepherd was still in the habit of making long journeys on foot, to drive his flock to distant markets. Many yet living have described these journeys to the author —with their delights and difficulties,—the housing for the night, it might be upon the top of Minchmoor, with no shelter but a plaid, or the waking in the dales of Yorkshire, to see the whole green country around turned white with the flocks driven thither to some great sale. The name of the Drovers' Plots, applied to a small wayside field near Yetholm, recall the practice to this day. Ere this, Hogg had made such journeys, having in 1793 extended his knowledge of the country by driving a flock of his master's to Strathfillan in Perthshire. Yet, notwithstanding this, how sequestered from the world his life at this time really was is well brought out by an incident which now falls to be recorded. In the

year 1786—ten years, that is, before the date at which our narrative has now arrived—a young peasant, or small tenant-farmer, from the West had, by sheer force of native genius, set Scotland ringing with his name—being acclaimed and fêted in the capital as no man of his station and antecedents had ever been before. A reaction promptly followed this enthusiasm; yet, at any time during the ten years which still separated Robert Burns from his miserable end, his name must have been apt to occur in conversation wherever two or three were together. This on the strength of the purely external aspects of the phenomenon; for the number of persons inclined to concern themselves with its inner significance would as yet be, naturally, but small. And yet echoes of the acclamations of literary Edinburgh had failed to travel over the intervening thirty miles or so, even to the comparatively cultivated household of Blackhouse, and it was not until 1797, the year following the Ayrshire poet's death, that Hogg first heard his name. The manner and immediate consequences of his doing so were sufficiently dramatic.

One day when he was keeping his sheep as usual, a certain Jock Scott, who is described as 'half-daft,' came to him on the hill-side—perhaps the dark heathery slope of Blackhouse Heights—and to wile away the time repeated to him the poem of *Tam o' Shanter*. The effect upon Hogg was electrical—'I was delighted!' he cries, in his reminiscences, 'I was far more than delighted — I was ravished! I cannot describe my feelings.' And then, in answer doubtless to eager questions, the haverel—who surely himself possessed a touch of power—informed him that the poem had been made 'by one Robert Burns, the sweetest poet that ever was born'; but that he had died 'last harvest,' and his place would never be supplied. Other

facts about his life were added, and—the season being summer, when there was no great pressure of work—ere Hogg left the hill he had *Tam o' Shanter* by heart. It remained his favourite poem during the rest of his life.

But this was by no means the end of the incident, so far as he was concerned. The revelation of Burns's verses and life-story had come to him in the fulness of time, and with it his own genius entered upon a new phase of development. Hitherto, as Jamie the Poeter, he had sung in the main 'but as the linnets sing'—instinctively, as his brother shepherds did, only perhaps with somewhat more of assiduity and of acceptance. But, henceforth, a deeper purpose underlay his reverie, a more hazardous ambition inspired his life. Every day, as he tells us, he 'pondered on the genius and the fate of Burns.' And then he would weep, and continually think within himself, 'What is to hinder me from succeeding Burns?' Anon he recollected that there were some points at which he had the advantage. He had, for instance, much more time to read and compose than any ploughman could have, and could sing more old songs than ever ploughman could in the world. But then, again, his difficulty in writing would depress him. Such were, in his case, the alternating aches and transporting uncertainties of the delicious period of adolescence and the excess of life. Many a young man of talent has known the like. But that James Hogg lived to overcome enormous difficulties, to rise from perfect obscurity to eminence, and to make good his dream of ranking among peasant poets as second to Burns, is enough to entitle him, even in the estimation of such as care only for what is practical, to a place among famous Scots.

Hogg has left some interesting particulars as to his

method of composition, which seems to have remained practically unaltered through life. When writing prose, he tells us that he was powerless to frame a single sentence until he had the pen in his hand, to catch the ideas as they arose, and that having once set down his thoughts, he never made a second copy. When making poetry, on the other hand, his method was—let the piece be of what length it would—to compose and correct it wholly in his mind, or on a slate, ere he put pen to paper, and then to write it off—after which he could rarely be brought to alter a syllable. His friend Laidlaw, whose taste was finer than his, repeatedly represented to him the desirability of revising his pieces; but Hogg was not to be persuaded. He would reply that he would write the next piece better; but that this should remain as it was. In 1800, he began and completed the two first acts of a tragedy, bearing the Radcliffian title of *The Castle in the Wood*, which with much self-complacency he submitted to his literary adviser. But Laidlaw, in the tiresome manner characteristic of such functionaries, pronounced the effort 'faulty in the extreme,' and, on returning it, was found to have scored through several of the most elaborate of its speeches. The poet cursed his friend's stupidity, and, throwing the tragedy aside, never afterwards added a line to it.

Hogg has told us that, so happy was he at Blackhouse, that, but for external circumstances, he might have passed the rest of his life there. His brother William was now assisting their father in the management of the small farm of Ettrickhouse, in which the old man would appear to have reinstated himself. But, in 1800, William took to himself a wife, and Ettrickhouse not being suited to contain two families, James was recalled to take over his brother's duties. As Robert Hogg was by this time eighty years of age, James became practically the farmer,

and this arrangement continued until Whitsunday 1803, or perhaps more probably 1804, when, the lease having expired, the farm was let over the elder Hogg's head. The three years of his second residence at Ettrickhouse were in more than one way eventful in the life of the poet.

It was, in fact, at this period that he made what may be described as his first 'hit.' Heretofore he had had no chance of appealing save to an audience of Yarrow hinds and farm-lasses; but his song of *Donald M^cDonald*, composed upon the prospect of a French invasion, penetrated beyond the limits of the Forest. It became, in fact, extremely popular, being set to music, engraved, and sung with great applause at social and public gatherings in Edinburgh. Nor was its success confined to Scotland; for the poet relates that, chancing to visit the theatre of Lancaster, whither probably he had gone with stock, he found his own song, in which a variation had been introduced, being delivered with great applause from the stage. Not wishing, naturally enough, to lose all credit due to himself as author, he turned to the man who sat next him, and whispered, 'That's ane o' mine's.' But the stranger, a jolly Yorkshireman, beholding in him a man of rugged appearance, swathed in a shepherd's plaid, merely laughed at his assumption and set him down for a Scotsman with a bee in his bonnet. He was by no means the only one to overlook the author's just claims to recognition. At a masonic dinner in Edinburgh, when the song had been sung with loud applause and thrice encored, Lord Moira, who presided, made it the text of a discourse on the utility of patriotic songs at a period of national danger. But it never occurred to his lordship to enquire who was author of this particular song. Worse still was the case of General M^cDonald. This gentleman, described as commanding the northern division of the British Army, took such a fancy to the song that he

caused it to be sung every week-day at the regimental mess, and would snap his fingers and join in the chorus when he heard it. More than this, he believed to his dying day that the song had been made in his honour. And yet he never once asked who had made it! 'Thankless,' truly, as Hogg remarks, 'is the poet's trade.'

But we have already seen that he was not the man to be easily discouraged; nor was he inclined to submit without an effort to see his claims passed over in silence. Hence his earliest publication. His own account of the circumstances which produced it is that, being constrained to spend the interval between two sales in Edinburgh, in order to dispose of certain unsold sheep, he decided to beguile the tedium of his waiting by having some of his poems put into type. Not having his manuscript with him, he was compelled to select from his compositions those which he best remembered, rather than such as were intrinsically most meritorious, and having consigned these to a printer, and disposed of his sheep, he returned forthwith to his Forest wilds, thinking little more about the matter. This, as has been said, is his own account of the transaction; but Mr Craig-Brown points out that it was an after-thought, adapted to meet later aspects of the case, and that as a matter of fact the poems had been revised by Laidlaw and another.[1] Early in 1801 [2] they duly made their appearance, in a neat volume, bearing the title *Scottish Pastorals, Poems, Songs, etc., Mostly written in the dialect of the South*, and the imprint of 'John Taylor, Grassmarket.' This booklet extends to sixty-two pages, and was sold at the price of a shilling. It has been repeatedly described by writers upon Hogg, but

[1] *History of Selkirkshire*, vol. i. p. 341.

[2] They are referred to, apparently as already published, in the earliest of Hogg's letters which has been preserved, bearing date January 1801. Mrs Garden's *Memorials of James Hogg*, p. 36.

copies of it are somewhat rare, and the descriptions mentioned are generally sufficient proof that their writers had never seen what they describe. Of the seven pieces which it contains, the first is a spirited lament for 'Geordie Fa',' (evidently one of the Yetholm gipsy Faas), noted in his day as a fiddler and poacher, and for his stout physique and genial manners. The second is an eclogue in which shepherds discuss the times, and the third a pastoral love-tale. These pieces are by no means ill-written, and for vigour, point and spontaneity need not fear comparison with the verse of Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd.* In the *Dialogue in a Country Churchyard*, written in obvious imitation of Gray, the poet tunes his lyre to a much higher strain, and is less successful in steering clear of bathos, that stumbling-block of rustic singers.

But innocent, if not positively meritorious, as the little volume was, it became a source of much mortification to poor Hogg, whose venial equivocation as to its origin affords, surely, matter for sympathy rather than censure. In the first place, the printer had not done his work to the author's satisfaction.[1] Then the poet's censorious neighbours chose to take exception to his having styled himself on the title-page a 'tenant-farmer,' when the lease of the farm which he farmed was made out in his brother's name. A sufficiently harmless allusion to Lord Napier, a leading local land-owner, seems to have produced further unpleasantness. Worst of all, the book passed almost unnoticed; and altogether so disgusted was Hogg with the result of his venture that he himself 'lost conceit' of the poems, and came to characterize them as 'sad stuff.' It is perhaps the only instance in his career of undue self-depreciation. So acute, indeed, was his chagrin that the

[1] Hogg speaks of 'typographical errors abounding in every page,' (Autobiography, p. xxiv.), but this is an exaggeration. The Errata mentioned on the fly-leaf are but eight.

poor poet actually suffered in health, and was constrained to take to his bed. But, if easily elated, easily cast down, Hogg's nature was far too healthy to brood long over the buffets of fortune. The next event in his career was of a far more auspicious character.

It was in summer of 1802 that he first met Walter Scott,[1] then known to the world chiefly as the author of some ballads and translations from the German, who two or three years earlier had been appointed Sheriff-depute of Selkirkshire. Hogg tells us that he was at work one day in a field on his father's farm, when he received intimation that some gentlemen desired his immediate presence at Ramseycleuch. One of these was supposed to be the 'Shirra' himself, as Hogg was delighted to hear; for, having seen the first volumes of the *Border Minstrelsy*, he had taken down a number of ballads from his mother's singing, and sent them to the editor with a view to their insertion in the forthcoming third volume. But the actual scene of the meeting, like other scenes in his life, can only be done justice to in the words in which he himself describes it:—

'I accordingly flung down my hoe,' he writes, 'and hasted away home to put on my Sunday clothes, but before reaching it I met the Shirra and Mr William Laidlaw, coming to visit me. They alighted, and remained in our cottage a considerable time, perhaps nearly two hours, and we were friends on the very first exchange of sentiments. It could not be otherwise, for Scott had no duplicity about him; he always said as he thought. My mother chanted the ballad of *Old Maitlan'*

[1] Hogg himself dates the meeting in the summer of 1801; but he was generally careless as to dates, and as he says a moment later that he had previously seen the first volumes of the *Border Minstrelsy*, which were not published until January 1802, we are justified in transferring the incident to the later year.

to him, with which he was highly delighted, and asked her if she thought it ever had been in print. And her answer was: "O na, na, sir, it never was printed i' the world, for my brothers an' me learned it an' mony mae frae auld Andrew Moor, and he learned it frae auld Baby Mettlin, wha was housekeeper to the first Laird of Tushilaw."[1] This lady was said to have been "another nor a gude ane," about whom many queer stories were told. "But O, she had been a grand singer o' auld songs an' ballads."'

Then the clever old peasant-mother, still addressing herself to the Sheriff, went on to say that, 'excepting George Warton an' James Stewart,' there was never one of her songs printed until he had printed them, and that in so doing he had entirely spoilt them. 'They were made for singing an' no for reading; but ye hae broken the charm now, an' they'll never be sung mair.' (She was right, for the function of the man-of-letters in regard to tradition is first to kill it, and then to embalm its dead body.) 'An' the worst thing of a',' she added, 'they're nouther right spell'd nor right setten down.'

'Take ye that, Mr Scott,' said Laidlaw, to which Scott responded with a hearty laugh.

Then, says Hogg, 'my mother gave him a hearty rap on the knee with her open hand, and said, "Ye'll find, however, that it is a' true that I'm tellin' ye."' And he adds, 'My mother has been too true a prophetess, for from that day to this, these songs, which were the amusement of every winter evening, have never been sung more.'

In this pleasant manner was inaugurated a friendship of which it is pleasing to record that it endured unbroken until the day of Scott's death, nearly thirty years later. Not for a moment is it to be supposed that, during that period, its vitality was not tested,—ay, and pretty severely tested

[1] Mr Craig-Brown explains that the first Anderson of Tushilaw must have been meant.

—by either side. To assert this of any friendship whatever would probably be to remove it out of the sphere of human things; but especially must this be the case where two men of such marked individuality as Scott and Hogg were the parties concerned. Be it freely acknowledged, therefore, that on both sides causes of irritation were supplied, not once, but repeatedly. But only the more honourable on that account is it to the depth of character and constancy of either party, and through these to human nature, that in the long run these rufflings of the surface were uniformly weathered, and that reciprocal respect for worth and talent triumphantly carried the day.

But to resume. The interview in the cottage over, Scott and Laidlaw departed to examine some monuments in Ettrick Churchyard—among them, of course, that of 'Fourfold' Boston. But Hogg met them again in the evening at dinner at Ramseycleuch. During the entertainment, the conversation happened to turn on the rival merits of the Cheviot and the Forest breed of sheep—denominated respectively the *long* and the *short* sheep—happened to turn on this subject and to settle there. Now this was not precisely the sort of information that Scott had come into Ettrick Forest in quest of. He grew bored, and, assuming his 'advocate's manner,' turned to Mr Brydon, the farmer host, and, remarking that he was rather at a loss regarding the merits of this *very* important question, enquired 'how long a sheep must actually measure to come under the denomination of a *long* sheep?' The farmer fell at once into the trap, and, in all sincerity, hastened to set his questioner right:—'It's the woo', sir; it's the woo' that mak's the difference. The lang sheep hae the short woo', and the short sheep hae the lang thing, and these are just kind o' names we gie them, ye see.' The simplicity of the reply set the company laughing; and fourteen years later, when Scott's novel of the *Black Dwarf* appeared, it was

the discovery of this incident repeated in its opening pages which enabled Hogg to establish for himself the identity of its author.

Next day the party visited Buccleuch and Mount Comyn—the original possessions, in that district, of the Scott family—where they hoped to discover relics of antiquity. They, however, found nothing, excepting the remains of an old chapel and churchyard, and of a kiln-mill and mill-dam—the latter being inferred by them, as no corn grew in the district, to have been used for grinding the tributes in kind brought as 'black-mail' to the chieftain. Among the remains of the chapel a search was made for the blue marble stone—spoken of here as a font—which was searched for at a later date by Scott Riddell.[1] Finding, however, that at the spot where the altar had stood, the debris had been dug out to the foundations, the seekers concluded that someone had forestalled them in their search. The castles of Tushilaw and Thirlestane were also visited. The picture drawn by Hogg of Scott as he appeared at this period is extremely pleasing. The Sheriff, now in the very hey-day of his strength and manhood, brimmed over with life, high spirits and friendliness, and sat well a high-mettled steed which lost no opportunity of availing itself of the natural difficulties of the country.

However deeply absorbed in poetical thought, James Hogg was too true to his nature as a Lowland Scot to lose sight of the desire to get on in the world, or in other words to better his material condition. By this time he had, as he tells us, made three journeys into the Highlands—one on horseback and two on foot—upon each occasion penetrating further into a district which had at all times a powerful attraction for him; and it seems that one at least of the objects of these journeys was to estab-

[1] See above, p. 27.

lish himself, if not as a farmer on his own account, at least as manager for another. On one of the journeys, having proceeded as far as Harris in the Hebrides, he had been struck by the possibilities of the place as a scene of sheep-farming operations;[1] and being about this time cast on the world, through the letting of Ettrick-house over his head,[2] he resolved to invest his capital—consisting of £200 saved during his ten-years' service at Blackhouse—in taking and stocking a farm in the island. A neighbouring small farmer, who also possessed some capital, became his partner in the speculation, and, in view of his approaching departure, in the spring or early summer of 1804 he penned his *Farewell to Ettrick.*

In this poem he dwells fondly on recollections of his childhood, on the aspirations of his early life, and on the many happy moments he has spent in the Forest, and, anticipating the constancy of his attachment to that locality, declares his resolve, if it be denied him to revisit it in life, at least to lay his bones there after death. This conception is, of course, in the main conventional; yet, as summing up impressions of the writer's early life, the poem is not without biographical interest. An undertone of reproach runs through it, too—like that of a man who feels himself to have been hardly dealt by, or neglected; and the lines—

> 'Ye'll maybe cherish some at hame
> Wha dinna just sae weel deserve 't—'

[1] His *Shepherd's Guide*, 1807, includes an Essay on encouraging Sheep-Farming in some districts of the Highlands. He describes one of these journeys, made in July and August 1802, in a series of letters addressed to S—— W—— Esquire [Walter Scott, (?)] and published in the *Scots Magazine*, October 1802, June 1803. See also Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, p. 111.

[2] Hogg fixes the date of his supersession in the farm of Ettrick-house as Whitsunday 1803. His parents seem still to have occupied the cottage.

have the accent of complete sincerity—it might almost be said of sincerity in spite of the writer. Though uneven in execution, the verses contain sweet and tuneful passages. The poet's tried friend, William Laidlaw, comes in for a word of grateful and affectionate remembrance.

The remoteness of Hogg's proposed place of exile must be judged, of course, by the standards of his own day, and it then becomes a point of coincidence between his life and that of Burns that either poet had been on the eve of emigrating—an intention which, in either case, was at the last moment abandoned. As to the motives which determined the sudden abandonment of Hogg's cherished scheme, his Autobiography is provokingly reticent. Observing that it would be 'tedious and trifling' were he to enter into details, he is content to tell us that his scheme was 'absolutely frustrated.'

From Thomson's Memoir of the poet, we gather that the title to the Harris farm was not clear. It became the subject of litigation in the Court of Session, and in July 1804 Hogg was served with a notice prohibiting him from taking possession. Having invested his savings in the purchase of stock for the farm, he became a heavy loser over the transaction. Of an expansive nature, he had talked freely of his project, and in order to avoid questions and remarks which could not fail to be disagreeable to him, he now withdrew into Cumberland, where he spent the remainder of the summer. On returning to Scotland, he found himself very much in the same position whence he had started thirteen years before. His savings—the fruits of a steady and hard-working life—were gone, and it says a good deal for his philosophy and native good spirits that he was able 'cheerfully' again to engage himself as a shepherd. His employer on this occasion was a Mr Harkness, of Mitchelslack, in Nithsdale.

Here he led a life of great loneliness, herding his sheep

upon Queensberry Hill, and sheltering himself from the rain in a tiny bothy, which had to be entered on all fours, and did not admit of his standing upright within it. Judge of the cheering effect in his solitude of a visit which he now describes. He was keeping his sheep as usual, one autumn day, when he caught sight of two men coming towards him, who were strangers, and from their walk evidently not shepherds. Calling off his dog, Hector, who was inclined to dispute their passage, Hogg awaited their approach, and found that one was a pleasant-looking man of about forty, and the other a dark ungainly youth, 'with a boardly frame for his age, and strongly marked manly features—the very model of Burns.' After making sure of Hogg's identity, the elder of the new-comers seized him by the hand, saying, 'Then, sir, I am glad to see you. There is not a man in Scotland whose hand I am prouder to hold!' And such is the poet's nature that doubtless these words went far towards consoling Hogg for his recent misfortunes! He could not say a word in reply, but glanced downward at his ragged coat and bare feet, as if to remind the man whom he was addressing.

Meantime the youth stood modestly at a respectful distance, while the elder went on to explain that they were brothers, and that the younger's name was Allan Cunningham, the greatest admirer that Hogg had on earth, and himself an aspiring poet of some promise.[1] Allan had heard of Hogg's presence in the neighbourhood, and would give his brother no peace until he consented that they should go forth together and visit him. Then Hogg stepped down the hill, and shaking the brawny hand of the young mason made him warmly welcome. After this the three adjourned to the bothy, to feast on Hogg's frugal fare and on what the Cunning-

[1] The younger Cunningham, born Dec. 1784, was fourteen years Hogg's junior.

hams had brought with them, whilst the two whose names were afterwards to become widely celebrated recited their poems. This incident proves that, though Hogg's *Pastorals* had fallen flat, the reputation as a song-writer which he had already won was spreading.

Hogg seems to have remained two or three years at Mitchelslack, for it was from that place that he published his second volume, which is dated 1807. The idea of this collection of poems had been suggested by Scott's *Border Minstrelsy*. For, whilst astonished and delighted by the exactness with which its old ballads had been taken down and the accompanying traditions and superstitions had been recorded, Hogg tells us that he was less satisfied with the 'Imitations of the Antient Ballad' which complete the volumes, and indeed it may be acknowledged that, whether judged as poetry or simply as imitations, the efforts of Leyden, Kirkpatrick Sharpe, and even Scott himself, often leave a good deal to be desired. Animated to rivalry by this feeling, Hogg set about collecting traditions suited to his purpose, which he proceeded to fashion into ballads, and the result was the make-up of the volume entitled *The Mountain Bard*. Scott, who meantime had not lost sight of him, lent him assistance in getting the book subscribed for, and recommended it to the bookseller Constable, by whom it was published. The poems were prefaced by a short autobiography of the author, and the whole was fitly dedicated to Scott.

It was in reference to this book that Hogg paid that visit to Scott in Edinburgh of which a description by the satirical Lockhart has obtained only too wide a currency. Lockhart states that, being invited to dinner, Hogg made his appearance in the ordinary dress of a shepherd—no great wonder, surely, under the circumstances—and that, on entering the drawing-room, he proceeded to stretch himself at full length upon a sofa—an unconscious breach of

decorum which he afterwards justified by explaining that he had merely followed the example of the lady of the house, who happened to be ailing at the time. During dinner, his songs, jests and anecdotes enlivened the company; but, as the evening wore on, he seems to have been betrayed into a sort of *crescendo* of familiarity in his forms of address, which rose from the formal 'Mr Scott,' through 'Sherra,' 'Scott,' and 'Walter,' to 'Wattie'—a climax which he contrived to cap by addressing Mrs Scott as 'Charlotte.' All this is scarcely of a piece with what we have seen so far of the demeanour of our pensive Child of Nature; but we have to remember that high animal spirits were not less characteristic of him than contemplation. An extant letter of apology[1] shows that, in his own opinion, Hogg had gone rather too far that night. On the other hand we must not forget that Lockhart was yet a child when the scenes which he so pungently describes took place, and that it is sometimes not difficult to construct a 'good story' out of very slender materials.

Hogg had been very successful in his search for traditions, and such stories as those of the Ettrick Pedlar, of 'Muckle-mou'd Meg,' and of the murder of the heir of Thirlestane, afford excellent foundations on which to rear a weird or romantic ballad. Unhappily the bard failed to do justice to his materials, his verses exhibiting little poetic power, and, what in him is more surprising, no real power in representing the supernatural. Very much of his volume is indeed composed of doggerel unredeemed. The ballads have nothing of the terseness and nerve of their models, being expanded, by otiose

[1] Printed in Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, chap. xii. It bears date December 1803, which shows that, probably by Scott's advice, Hogg delayed the publication of his book. The time occupied in getting the necessary number of subscribers would account for a part of the delay.

passages, to a tedious length. The explanation of so complete a failure seems to be that the ballad-form did not suit Hogg's talent, and it is a fact that he was never really successful in it, his undoubted and remarkable narrative gifts requiring apparently the greater latitude afforded by the less formal 'tale' in verse or prose. The interest of the book is thus mainly concentrated in the Notes, which still form a valuable and little-known repository of local folk-lore and tradition. It is noticeable also that, in such a story as that of the phantom Pedlar, we have a foretaste of Hogg's matured manner, as seen in the stories of the *Shepherd's Calendar*; whilst, in the ballad of *Mess John* (Binram), we find the germ of the still famous story of the *Brownie of Bodsbeck*. For their insight into dog-character, and rendering of the sympathy between dog and man, the homely and heartfelt verses addressed by the poet to his 'auld touzy trusty tike,' Hector, deserve a place in any collection on the subject which, in this age of anthologies, may be made or to make.

Simultaneously with *The Mountain Bard*, Constable published for Hogg *The Shepherd's Guide*, a Practical Treatise on the Diseases of Sheep, with observations on the most suitable farm-stocking for the various climates of the country. The author's modest claim for the book is merely that it is written by a shepherd for shepherds, and incorporates the results of his own observation and daily conversation among men of the calling,—from which he goes on to discourse in straightforward and thoroughly business-like style upon 'braxy,' 'sturdy,' 'pelt-rot,' 'cling,' 'wild-fire,' and the like ailments, into which we are not called to follow him.

Ballad verse was the order of the day, and notwithstanding shortcomings *The Mountain Bard* was successful, Lockhart in his *Life of Scott*[1] attesting its

[1] Chapter xvii.

popularity, as well as the fact that the author was now beginning to be generally known and appreciated in Scotland. Continuing his kindly exertions on Hogg's behalf, Scott in 1808 exchanged many letters with the Earl of Dalkeith and his brother, Lord Montagu, touching a provision for the poet. Hogg's own fancy at this time was for an ensigncy in a militia regiment, from which Scott discouraged him, preferring the less showy situation of a berth in the Excise. Neither scheme, however, came to anything. But Hogg was at this time by no means entirely dependent on the help of friends.

Before publishing the ballads, Constable had informed their author that his poetry would not sell; to which Hogg had characteristically replied that he thought it as good as any he had seen. On this, Constable said that, as Hogg appeared to him 'a gey queer chiel,' if two hundred subscribers to it could be obtained, he would publish the book, and pay as much for it as he could. By one means or another Hogg procured no less than five hundred subscribers, and Constable on his part having acted, as the author says, 'on the whole with great liberality,' the latter found himself possessed of nearly £300, of which £86 had been paid him on account of *The Shepherd's Guide*. There had, however, been great disparity in the treatment which he received from his subscribers, some of whom paid him double, treble, and even ten times what was due, whilst a third of the number did not pay him at all.

Elated by the comparative ease with which what was for him a large sum of money had been earned, and doubtless feeling himself entirely independent of his friends, Hogg now set up on his own account as a farmer. But by his own confession success had driven him 'perfectly mad.' Accordingly his first venture was to lease a sheep-farm in Dumfriesshire for exactly half

as much again as it was worth. By his own account he had been cheated into this transaction by a rascal who meant to rob him of all he was worth, and who within a year effected this purpose. But, in the meantime, Hogg had further involved himself by taking another farm, of such dimensions that he tells us it would of itself have taken more than three times his capital to stock it. So he now 'got every day out of one strait and confusion into a worse.' To ourselves the history of the next year or two is a blank, as to which we only know that, between his two farms he 'blundered and struggled on,' 'giving up all thought of poetry and literature of every kind.' The words quoted are in each case his own, and we shall probably do well to remember that there may have been more than one side to the story of his farming misadventures. When next he emerges into view, he is once more penniless. 'Finding myself, at length, fairly run aground,' he says, 'I gave my creditors all that I had, or rather suffered them to take it, and came off and left them. I never asked for any settlement, which would not have been refused me.' Thus at thirty-nine years of age (1809), he found himself called upon to make a fresh start in life, and it is really not until now that his career in the capacity in which he chiefly interests ourselves—in the capacity, that is, of a professional man of letters—may be said practically to begin.

CHAPTER III

FAILURE is not popular anywhere—least of all, perhaps, among the intensely practical natives of the Scottish Lowlands, and accordingly, when Hogg returned to Ettrick Forest after being 'sold up,' it was to find himself 'cold shouldered.' 'I found the countenances of all my friends altered,' he writes, 'and even those whom I had loved and trusted most disowned me, and told me so to my face.' Let us here allow something for the exaggeration natural to the poetic temperament, and, among poets, by no means least natural to Hogg. With, possibly, a touch of excess in the opposite direction, he had boasted erewhile that his ruin had wholly failed to depress him—'I was generally most cheerful when most unfortunate.' But there are lines, not only in his *Farewell to Ettrick*, but in perhaps the best poem he had so far published, his verses addressed to his dog, which prove that he was keenly sensitive to the unkindness, if not of Fortune, at any rate of his fellow-creatures, and that, real or fancied, this had driven him to something like a quarrel with his kind. But, if he was sensitive, sensitiveness was in him no source of weakness; it braced him to resolve to show his fickle friends that they were in the wrong.

His position in Ettrick was, however, now greatly worse than it had ever been before. Hitherto he had always had his trade to fall back on; but he tells us that, since he had appeared as a poet and had been himself a farmer, he no longer found any farmer willing to engage him as a shepherd. And so, having had his services declined

even by some of his old masters, he was compelled to spend the winter in idleness, and consequently in penury. Readers of Mr Hardy's pastorals will recall the parallel case of Gabriel Oak, who remains unhired in the market-place of Casterbridge, when to the enquiries of successive farmers as to whose farm he had worked on last, he was compelled to reply 'My own.' In an ideal world the duties and responsibilities of a master would form a good training for the lighter burdens of servitude, but in a mere everyday world we are somehow not inclined to believe that this holds good.

The present state of matters could not go on, and accordingly, in February 1810, the poet, by this time reduced to 'utter desperation,' wrapped his shepherd's plaid about him, and set out for Edinburgh, determined, 'since no better could be,' to push his fortunes as a literary man. It was, indeed, the best thing he could have done, and in a letter addressed to a friend some four years later, he, with a humorous detachment and dispassionateness which were characteristic of him, fully recognizes it as such:—'It pleased God,' he writes, 'to take away by death all my ewes and my lambs, and my long-horned cow, and my spotted bull, for if they had lived and if I had kept the farm of Corfardin, I had been a lost man to the world, and mankind should never have known the half that was in me.' In another place he tells us that, had circumstances been favourable, he would have used his poetical talent as a 'staff,' but never as a 'crutch.'

This, as has been said, is the turning-point of Hogg's career, and as he leaves it behind him a change comes over himself. Hitherto we have delighted to picture him as a simple-minded shepherd, compelled by the necessity of his calling to dwell apart in his hill-fastnesses, and there communing with Nature, dreaming dreams, musing on old traditions, and nursing in his breast a high ambition.

During this period he comes, perhaps, as near to the character of the ideal shepherd of poetry as any man has ever done. It is only natural that we should be loth to divest him of that character, and yet the time has now arrived for doing so. From henceforth his lot is cast, though not consistently in the city, at least amid the throng and push of life's mêlée, and the attributes and qualities developed by his new environment are of the serviceable rather than of the ideal order. And yet, after all, is it not true that a time comes to most of us when the qualities which we most admire and love are chosen among the former? But to the point. If, then, for the sake of contrast, it be permitted us to draw the line of demarcation somewhat sharply, we may here say that, passing at one step from the penumbra of romance into the sunlight of a work-a-day world, the Daphnis of our Border Oaristys is straightway transformed into a shrewd homely Scottish peasant, possessed of plenty of 'grit,' and of a gift from Nature which he is much bent on turning, according to the recognized methods, to the best possible profit and account. Or, to vary the expression, it might be said that the bygone forty years of the Shepherd's life were those in which he lived poetry, the five-and-twenty to come those in which he wrote it. And no doubt the period of transition brings with it a sacrifice of something more than mere picturesqueness, or mere sentiment. Henceforward, for instance, in our hero's life, the spirit of contemplation is not much in evidence; whilst, on the other hand, amid fostering surroundings, his high animal spirits are somewhat apt to become uproarious, his belief in himself to degenerate into a loudly-expressed, though always as we believe half-humorous, self-assertiveness. Well! and if this be so, what then? Happy is the man—above all, the man tried as Hogg was tried, by so many ups and downs of fortune—against whom nothing worse than this

can be alleged. And it will be our pleasant task to exhibit him to the end, not only upright and virtuous in the greater essentials, but throughout his moral being sound, honest, pure and wholesome—in native steadfastness of character a shining contrast to his more divinely gifted predecessor. Indeed, were we to judge him only as one who by perseverance in the face of superhuman difficulties lived to realize his ambition, and among Scottish peasants to rank second to the poet Burns, his life would yet be fruitful of instruction and example to succeeding generations.

Hogg had ground for believing that his position in Edinburgh would be, at the worst, not quite so bad as it had now become in Ettrick. As we know from Lockhart, his three published volumes had already won him something of a name; whilst to his literary friends, such as Scott and Constable, he doubtless felt that he might confidently look for a less sorry reception than had awaited him in his native valley. But, with the best will in the world, it is not always possible to befriend budding talent, and the new-comer, who even now, in his own words, 'knew no more of human life and manners than a child,' must have been grievously disappointed, on reaching the capital, to find his poetical talent rated nearly as low there as his shepherding had been at home. It was in vain that he applied for employment to newsmongers, booksellers, and editors of magazines. They were willing enough to accept and publish his contributions, but then 'there was no money going—not a farthing!' And this, as he observes, did not suit him. We are prepared to believe it, and but for the generous friendship of a certain Mr John Grieve, son of a Cameronian minister of Cacrabank in Ettrick, who had known him from childhood, it had doubtless gone hardly with the Shepherd at this time. But Grieve, who was now comfortably established as a

hatter in the capital, was in fact as true a friend to him as William Laidlaw had been formerly; and, indeed, if the power of attracting staunch friends be taken, as it almost always may be, as a test of inherent worth, then the possession of these two strong and disinterested friendships in the days of his obscurity must be allowed to speak volumes in favour of Hogg's character. Associated with Grieve in this friendship was his partner in business, a Mr Scott; and with these two, during the first six months of his stay in Edinburgh, the Shepherd made his home. They watched over his welfare with the kindest care, suffering him to want for neither money nor clothes, whilst their delicacy, by forestalling his wants, saved his pride the pain of mentioning them. The three friends, as Hogg tells us, spent many happy evenings together; and, indeed, when circumstances permitted, were seldom apart. Then Grieve, who was a man of cultivated tastes, exercised a beneficial influence over his guest, not only by firm belief in his powers, but by stimulating him to work; and, besides this, having many literary acquaintances in the town, was doubtless able to be of practical service to him in furnishing introductions.

At length, rather against his will, the publisher Constable, who is described as having 'a sort of kindness' for his wholesome rustic client, agreed to bring out another volume for him, and *The Forest Minstrel* saw the light. The edition consisted of 1000 copies, to sell at five shillings each, Hogg being to receive half profits. But he tells us that, having reason to suspect that the concern had proved a losing one, he never applied for his share, and consequently received nothing. The Countess of Dalkeith, to whom the book was dedicated, and the praises of whose family were sung in it, presented him, however, with £100.

Hogg has been so often twitted with self-complacency,

walk orderly, they must dance. Take for instance, from among the love-songs:—

'Sing on, sing on, my bonnie bird,
The sang ye sang yestreen, O,
When here, aneath the hawthorn wild,
I met my bonnie Jean, O.'

or,

'The wild-rose, blushing on the brier,
Was set wi' draps o' pearly dew;
As full and clear the bursting tear
That row'd in Ellen's een o' blue.'

or,

'Oft has the lark sung o'er my head,
And shook the dew-drops frae his wing;
Oft hae my flocks forgot to feed,
An' round their shepherd form'd a ring. . . .'

or, yet again,

'I'll pu' the gowan off the glen,
The lily off the lea,
The rose and hawthorn bud I'll twine
To make a bob[1] for thee.'

or yet once more,

'A bramble shade around her head,
A burnie poplin' by, O;
Our bed the swaird, our sheet the plaid,
Our canopy the sky, O.'

or, lastly,

'When she and I to rest are gane,
May shepherds strew our graves wi' daisy,
And when o'er us they make their maen,
Aye join my name wi' bonny Leezy.'

But there are, indeed, a hundred passages as fresh, as

[1] Nosegay.

tuneful, and as unstudied, as the trills and gurgles of the thrush's song at eve. When the poet sings,

> 'The lammie to the ewe is dear,
> But Peggy's dearer far to me,'

or the lover's ecstasy finds expression in the words,

> 'O weel's me on my happy lot!
> O weel's me on my dearie!'

we feel that the images and the language of nature are here in their place; the field flowers bloom in the Shepherd's line as in their native wilds. The shepherd lover of 'Bonnie Mary' is worthy of Longus; whilst, in such a verse as that which follows, the incidents and feelings of rustic courtship are touched off with charming naïveté and point:

> 'The little doggie at the door
> Into his arms he caught it,
> An' hugg'd an' sleek'd it o'er and o'er,
> For love o' them that aught[1] it.'

The less fervid songs also have the merit appropriate to their class; whilst the patriotic ones, if necessarily somewhat more declamatory, are stirring and genuinely inspired. Besides Hogg's songs, the *Forest Minstrel* contained Laidlaw's well-known poem of *Lucy's Flitting*, and a number of songs by Allan Cunningham's brother Thomas, with which we are not here concerned.

Hogg's next scheme was to start a weekly journal of his own, to be devoted to *belles-lettres*, morals, and criticism—a project on which Constable and other printers and booksellers did their best to pour cold water. 'D—n them,' was the terse comment of the belated Grub-streetite, as he ran from one to the other, 'the folks are all combined

[1] Owned.

in a body.' At last, such were his perseverance and his belief in that which Napoleon in his own case called his 'star,' that he induced one James Robertson, an honest bookseller of Nicolson Street, to take up his plan. The result was that, on September 1st, 1810, the first issue of *The Spy* made its appearance, priced at fourpence. It had a brisk sale, and a few shillings with an immense number of half-pence, brought to Hogg by the newspaper-boy, constituted the first money he had earned since his arrival in Edinburgh six months before. This boy, by the way, had his own plan for swelling receipts, for he demanded payment for several hundred copies of the paper which were marked to be delivered free, explaining, if objections were raised, that he did not ask anything for *delivery*, but must be paid the price of the article delivered.

The new enterprize had begun hopefully; but a thoughtless breach of decorum in the third or fourth issue at once lowered the circulation by seventy-three, and made enemies for the paper, the literary ladies of the town in particular declaring with unanimity that the author would never write a sentence deserving to be read. Hogg's gallantry—sufficiently robust on most occasions—was not proof against this trial, and he relieved his feelings with these further expletives, 'Gaping deevils! wha cares what they say! If I leeve ony time, I'll let them see the contrair o' that.' Plebeian perhaps on the surface, but there is the right spirit behind it.

His own frank account of the hatching of his articles for *The Spy* has about it a racy flavour of Grub Street and La Basse-Bohème. 'My publisher,' he writes, 'was a kind-hearted, confused body, who loved a joke and a dram. He sent for me every day about one o'clock, to consult about the publication; and then we uniformly went down to a dark house in the Cowgate, where we

drank whisky and ate rolls with a number of printers, the dirtiest and leanest-looking men I had ever seen.'

Hogg's habits hitherto had been so regular and temperate that he soon found this course of life injurious, and, resolving thereupon to have nothing more to do with it, he transferred the printing of *The Spy* to another firm. But the change, though morally salutary, was not pecuniarily fortunate. At the end of the year, the new printers, Aikman by name, instead of handing in profits, claimed for losses incurred, as they alleged, over the paper. These claims Hogg refused to pay, unless furnished with an account of the disposal of the numbers of the paper printed, and the upshot of the matter was that, being somewhat in Robertson's debt, he found himself at the end of a year of literary drudgery a loser rather than a gainer. It was thus high time to discontinue *The Spy*, which he brought to a conclusion with a farewell passage in which he once more drew the attention of the public to the singularity of his own story.

In supplying the weekly material for the paper he had had some assistance from Mr Robert Sym, an uncle of Professor Wilson, who was later to become known as the 'Timothy Tickler' of the *Noctes*, and from his friends Mr and Mrs James Gray, the former of whom had married as his first wife a sister of the lady who was eventually to become Mrs Hogg. Probably Jeffrey is right when he says of *The Spy*[1] that, though it exhibits 'frequent indications of a vigorous and aspiring mind,' the defects of Hogg's education, and his late and limited intercourse with society, are more apparent there than in the *Mountain Bard*. There is evidence in Hogg's correspondence[2] that, during the year 1811, he had some employment as a factor and land valuator, but it does not seem to have lasted long.

[1] *Edinburgh Review*, vol. xxiv., p. 160.
[2] *Memorials*, p. 50.

The next undertaking in which we find our hero interested was a Debating Society, established by himself and a few young men of his acquaintance, under the name of *The Forum*. Their meetings were held once a week, in a church in Carrubber's Close, the public—of whom sometimes as many as a thousand were present—being admitted on payment of sixpence a head. Hogg's friends had at first been unanimous in trying to dissuade him from coming forward as a public speaker, and, having regard to his rusticity and inexperience, there was certainly something to be said from their point of view. But there are times in life when to be wisely rash, and Hogg's native talent and originality now pulled him safely through the ordeal. He spoke at least once at every meeting, and we have his own complacent assurance that, though occasionally incurring pointed disapprobation, he was in general a 'prodigious favourite.' No doubt this same self-complacency would stand him in good stead by preserving him from any undue sensitiveness to 'chaff' or ridicule, of which the author of an avowedly hostile pamphlet[1] informs us that there was at times not a little. The young men, who got on admirably together, had appointed Hogg their Secretary, at a salary of £20 a-year; but this was never paid. But, if in a pecuniary sense he gained nothing from the Society, there were other respects in which he assures us that he owed it much. To its discipline, indeed, he freely attributes a share of his subsequent success in life, saying that it was practically the first schooling he had ever received. He adds, in reference to private debating

[1] The Life of the Ettrick Shepherd Anatomized in a Series of Strictures on the Autobiography of James Hogg prefixed to vol. i. of the *Altrive Tales*, by an Old Dissector [Dr James Browne], Hunter, Edinburgh, 1832.

societies—of which it will be remembered that he had had experience in his early Ettrick days — that these 'signify nothing. But a discerning public is a severe test, especially in a multitude, where the smallest departure from good taste, or from the question, is sure to draw down disapproval, and where no good saying ever misses observation or applause. If this do not assist in improving the taste, I know not what will.'

Notwithstanding benefits received from it, the Society was not without a ludicrous side, on which Hogg's strong sense of humour would be quick to seize. The result was *The Forum, A Tragedy for Cold Weather*—a musical farce in three acts, in which the debates were satirized, whilst the members, not excepting the author himself, were broadly 'taken off.' This piece pleased Hogg himself well; but feeling that some of its portraits were rather severe, he with more than his usual discretion in these matters kept the enjoyment of it to himself. At about the same time he also wrote another musical drama, which was submitted to his friend Mr Siddons, who in the main approved it highly. But it was not produced upon the stage.

The vogue of the Forum continued for three years; but considerably before that period had expired a most important event in Hogg's life had taken place—to wit, the publication of *The Queen's Wake*. His own account of the production of that poem, which was to prove not only his first real success, but the work by which his name was to be best remembered, assigns among his motives a singular degree of importance to what is purely casual. He remarks that the recent successes of Scott and Byron had turned public attention strongly in the direction of poetry, and that hence his friend Mr Grieve, having formed a very high opinion of certain pieces which he had published in *The Spy*, now did his best

to persuade him to take the field once more as a poet, and try his luck with the others. Having some metrical tales by him, and not wishing them to be lost, Hogg accordingly devised the plan of *The Queen's Wake*, so as to include them. With his happy facility of execution, a few months then sufficed for the carrying out of his project.

Having read the poem to Grieve, who declared that 'it would do,' Hogg wished to have further opinions as to its merits; but his friends showed no alacrity in meeting his wishes. He was living at Deanhaugh at the time, and thither he invited Mr and Mrs Gray, to drink tea and read a part of the poem. But he had not read half a page when the lady took exception to a word, which Grieve, who was present, defended. An argument thereupon arose, which diverted attention; and notwithstanding that the poor poet gave vent to some very broad hints, he found no opportunity of proceeding with his reading. His chagrin being made known, the Grays, with a view to making amends, fixed another meeting, appointing him to bring his manuscript to their house. But his second experience was even more mortifying than his first; for, ere Mr Gray had well reached the bottom of the third page, he was called out to listen to a mendicant bard reciting verses of his own in the lobby. The new attraction quite eclipsed Hogg, who, whilst the company flocked to hear the maunderings of a crazy beggar, found himself left with but a single companion, to read or not as he might think fit. Surely it speaks volumes for his good-nature, that, in spite of this, his friendship for the Grays suffered no abatement!

His next task was to find a publisher. Constable received him coldly, declining to take any steps in the matter until he should have seen the manuscript. To this Hogg would not accede, enquiring pertinently, what

skill had he (Constable) about the merits of a book; to which the publisher replied that at any rate he knew how to sell a book as well as any man, which should be some concern of the author's, and that he knew how to buy one, too, by——! In the sequel an arrangement was made by which Hogg was to procure two hundred subscribers to the book, whilst Constable on his part would pay £100 for the right of printing a thousand copies of it. But ere preliminaries were concluded, the poet received a much better offer, from a Princes Street bookseller named Goldie who had been a member of the Forum, and who, having seen the poem in manuscript and conceived a high opinion of it, offered Hogg not merely £100 for it, but the proceeds of the subscriptions—which were by this time promised—as well. The poet was loth to part from Constable, but happening to find him in a bad humour next time he called, he felt justified in closing with Goldie's offer, and in the spring of 1813 *The Queen's Wake* made its appearance.

In consequence partly of the breaking down of the readings, nobody had so far seen the poem, and on the day following its publication Hogg patrolled the streets of Edinburgh in a fever of anxiety, reading the title of his book in the booksellers' windows, but not daring to enter the shops. He, indeed, compares the state of his mind to that of a man between life and death, who awaits the sentence of the jury. The first encouragement he received was from a countryman of his own, a bluff spirit-merchant by name Dunlop, who, catching sight of him across the High Street, went over and accosted him in words which, though very unrefined, made a strong impression on the Shepherd, knowing as he did that the speaker possessed a 'great deal of rough common sense.' On Hogg's enquiring his meaning, the spirit-dealer proceeded as follows:—'D—n your stupid head, ye hae been pestering us wi' fourpenny

papers an' daft shilly-shally sangs, an' bletherin' an' speakin' i' the Forum, an' yet had stuff in ye to produce a thing like this.'—Hogg then asked if he had seen the new book. 'Ay, that I have, man; and it has lickit me out o' a night's sleep. Ye hae hit the right nail on the head now. Yon's the very thing, sir.'—'I'm very glad to hear you say sae, Willie,' replied the author, 'but what do ye ken about poems?'—'Never ye mind how I ken; I gi'e you my word for it, yon's the thing that will do.' And after some more to the same effect, the whisky-merchant turned on his heel, and went his way laughing, and miscalling the poet over his shoulder. Thus, at least, Hogg reports the conversation. Dunlop denied the truth of the story, which, one way or the other, is not of much importance. But it is obviously quite possible that a man of such rough-and-ready utterance may have forgotten his lightly-spoken words, whilst Hogg, as the party much more deeply interested, would treasure them in his memory.

In any case the world was prompt to endorse the verdict attributed to the whisky-merchant. Facing his acquaintances one by one, Hogg heard nothing but praises on all sides. 'The reading public,' writes his daughter,[1] 'was taken by storm.' 'Who,' they asked, 'was this poet who sang the beautiful lay of *Kilmeny*, and the incomparable *Witch of Fife*? Under what bushel has he been hiding his talents all these years?' In a word, from the hour of the appearance of the poem, 'James Hogg was acknowledged as a man of genius.' He was introduced to the leading literary celebrities of the town; great men and great ladies sought his acquaintance, and it became the fashion in Edinburgh to have the bard of *The Queen's Wake* at the supper-table. The little writing-table in the poet's lodgings, adds the same authority, was now usually

[1] *Memorials*, p. 55.

covered with notes of invitation. Such are, indeed, some of the outward and visible signs of literary success; but the poet was too shrewd a man to be uplifted overmuch by such straws in the wind, or to allow himself to be carried away by the tide of popular favour. We have his word that, at this time, excepting to a few intimate friends, he made himself 'exceedingly scarce.'

It must not, however, by any means be concluded that the success of the poem was either purely or mainly one of fashion. In a cordial letter to the poet, dated from Keswick, December 1814,[1] Southey employs these words: —'I will not say that *The Queen's Wake* has exceeded my expectations, because I have ever expected great things from you, since in 1805 I heard Walter Scott by his own fireside at Ashiestiel repeat *Gilmanscleuch*.[2] . . . But the *Wake* has equalled all that I expected.' At about the same time, Jeffrey, that 'prince of critics' of his own day, devoted an article in the *Edinburgh Review*[3] to a notice of the third edition of the poem. From this we gather, with something of surprise, that its success so far is not to be understood as having penetrated beyond the 'narrow sphere to which the personal influence of the author and publisher extends.' At the same time the reviewer, after supplying with not more than his wonted irony an account of Hogg's previous career, admits that the new work affords good ground for thinking that the poet 'is yet doomed to justify his early election, and in some measure to realize the proudest of his early anticipations.' The writer adds a tribute to the disinterestedness and independence of character of one who, as he verily believes, 'would rather starve upon poetry, than accept of ease and affluence on condition of renouncing it. Delighting still more in the pursuit itself,' continues the

[1] *Memorials*, p. 73.

[2] One of the ballads of *The Mountain Bard*. [3] Vol. xxiv. p. 157.

critic, 'than in the glory to which he no doubt thinks it is to conduct him, he is resolute, we are persuaded, to serve the Muses, even without the appropriate wages of fame. . . . It ought also to be recorded to his honour, that he has uniformly sought this success by the fairest and most manly means; and that neither poverty nor ambition has been able to produce in him the slightest degree of obsequiousness towards the possessors of glory or power.' The panegyric is quoted as not less well-deserved by Hogg than honourable to Jeffrey, and at the same time as greatly more generous in tone than most of the verdicts which we are now accustomed to associate with the name of the Edinburgh Aristarchus.

But it is high time to turn to the poem itself. It is divided into three 'Nights'—each of these having several tales allotted to it,—and has besides a metrical Introduction, Conclusion, and connecting narrative. The Introduction opens with an eloquent, appealing, and highly 'personal' strophe, addressed by the Shepherd to his visionary harp, his true friend through all the slights and sorrows of his chequered career, the associate of his youth, the confidant of his early love-dreams, and now, amid the cold winds of adversity, his consolation and sole stay. Much has been said of the Ettrick Shepherd's self-sufficiency—an attribute which in his case might fitly be considered as a happy provision of Nature to carry him over the immense difficulties of his carrer; but to turn to such a passage as the following is enough to wake our sympathy with the true inward nature and condition of the man:—

> 'Unknown to men of sordid heart,
> What joys the poet's hopes impart;
> Unknown, how his high soul is torn
> By cold neglect, or canting scorn:

That meteor torch of mental light,
A breath can quench, or kindle bright.
Oft has that mind, which braved serene
The shafts of poverty and pain,
The Summer toil, the Winter blast,
Fallen victim to a frown at last.
Easy the boon he asks of thee;
O, spare his heart in courtesy!'

The poet now passes to the landing at Leith, amid a nation's hopes and rejoicings, of the long-exiled Queen of Scots. Amid crowds and pageants, through scenes unfamiliar, the young Sovereign—a 'maiden' in the Shepherd's phrase—is borne by her airy palfrey, a vision of beauty, a veritable cynosure. But by a strange freak of woman's nature, what touches the fancy of the girl-queen most is neither the novelty nor the splendour of her surroundings, but the thrilling refrain of a chance-heard minstrel's melody,—

'Thy beauty is but a fading flower!'

Captivated by this strange new poetry, the queen decrees that a Wake be held at Holyrood at Eastertide, at which the minstrels of the kingdom shall sing before her for a prize—a first exercise of her royal prerogative which, taking precedence as it does of the cares of State, is not only in dramatic keeping with Mary's character, but, viewed in the light of subsequent events, has a pathos all its own.

Easter arrives, and with it come the minstrels. The Court is hushed, and the contest is inaugurated by Rizzio, who leads off with a sentimental poem, to which an effective contrast is supplied by the tale of sin and terror recounted by the second bard. It is by no means necessary to follow the minstrels categorically, and indeed it may be at once admitted that for critical readers in the present day the bulk of the poems have lost their interest. Nor in this respect do they compare to any great disadvantage

with the contemporary Eastern Tales of Lord Byron or of Moore's *Lalla Rookh*. It is enough that they should have delighted the public of their own day; they have failed to withstand the changes of fashion and the wear and tear of a century. For us of to-day *The Queen's Wake* lives by its two contrasted essays in the supernatural: *Kilmeny* and *The Witch of Fife*.

From the age of Horace's Epodes and *The Golden Ass* to that of *Albertus*, witchcraft has exercised a powerful fascination over the poetic mind; but *The Witch of Fife* is the poem *par excellence* of its kind in our own or any other language. One may say of it, indeed, that it lays bare the soul of witchcraft. Already with the opening sentences of its abrupt and agitated dialogue, we are transported, as it were, into an alien and unearthly atmosphere. The hush of midnight, the mute reproach of moonlight, and the sense of evil are about us. The galloping movement of the metre hurries us, will-we nill-we, on. The birds of heaven and the brute creation share in our astonishment, and demean themselves in a manner which is contrary indeed to nature, but most true to the nature reversed and revolutionized of the magic world into which the poet has misled us. And all the while his knowledge of Nature—the intimate unconscious knowledge of one who has never lived but with *her*—steads him well; for the howlet hunted out of breath and forced to yield herself a prisoner, that shy bird the gray curlew flying not away from man but to meet him, the weazels dancing on the hill, and the trouts, ravished with melody, leaping from the loch, are just such objects and incidents as tend to heighten the effect of the picture and the tension of the hour. When at last the witch describes her mounting of the 'humloke schaw'—

'A stout stallion was he'—

and her flight through the whistling moonless air, she, in

the literal sense of the words carries us with her, and for the moment—sober students as we are—we are forced to participate in the wild, the mad, intoxication and exhilaration of some heretofore unknown and unimaginable orgy or debauch.

'The second nychte, when the new moon set,
O'er the roaryng sea we flew;
The cockle-shell our trusty bark,
Our sailis of the grein sea-rue.

'And the bauld windis blew, and the fire flauchtis flew,
And the sea ran to the skie;
And the thunner it growlit, and the sea-dogs howlit,
As we gaed scouryng bye.

'And aye we mountit the sea-grein hillis,
Quhill we brushit throu the cludis of the hevin;
Than sousit dounright like the stern-shot light,
Fra the liftis blue casement driven.

'But our taickil stood, and our bark was good,
And se pang was our pearily prowe,
Quhan we culdna speil the brow of the wavis,
We needilit them throu belowe.'

But to quote from *The Witch of Fife* is no case of the artful exposure of a 'purple patch.' From first verse to last there is no shock or stumble to startle us back into our senses, or drop us sheer back to common earth. For the perfect and spontaneous accomplishment of a literary *tour-de-force*, there is but one other poem with which this one may be compared—the *Aikendrum* of William Nicholson.

But one more point and we have done. There is just one thing still wanted in the poem,—namely, the touch of humour, or of human interest, which shall keep the bewitched world in its place, and anchor it from completely drifting away from all relation to human affairs. By a stroke of true art, none the less to be admired for being purely unconscious, this lien or bond is supplied in the

grotesquely tragic figure of the old man, the witch's husband—with the unregenerate spirit dormant beneath his righteous upbraiding, and to be roused by the first breath of temptation which to him *is* temptation—and the story of the one night of rapture and of revelling for which he pays so dear.

Kilmeny, the remaining poem, represents the obverse side of the supernatural, as it is known in the superstitions of the Scottish peasantry,—the Paradiso of that Inferno. The story is one which, in a slightly different form, had been current in the poet's native valley. It tells of a beautiful and virtuous maiden, who goes walking in the greenwood:—

> 'It was only to hear the yorlin[1] sing,
> And pu' the blue cress-flower round the spring;
> The scarlet hip and the hyndberrye,
> And the nut that hung frae the hazel tree:'

Nevertheless she fails to return, and her mother, having sought her sorrowing and in vain, is fain at last to give her up for lost. But this is premature.

> 'When many lang day had come and fled,
> When grief grew calm, and hope was dead,
> When mess for Kilmeny's soul had been sung,
> When the bedesman had pray'd, and the dead bell rung:
> Late, late in a gloamin' when all was still,
> When the fringe was red on the westlin hill,
> The wood was sere, the moon i' the wane,
> The reek o' the cot hung o'er the plain,
> Like a little wee cloud in the world its lane;
> When the ingle lowed wi' an eiry leme,[2]
> Late, late in the gloamin' Kilmeny came hame!'

The girl is visibly altered in manner and aspect; her beauty has assumed a yet more spiritual cast, a strange stillness has come over her. Where has she spent the

[1] Yellow-hammer. [2] Gleam.

intervening seven years? Amid the soft air and impending silence of the wood, she had yielded to slumber, to be waked, by unfamiliar sounds, to gaze on the unfamiliar sights of 'a far countrye.' In other words, in virtue of the surpassing purity of her nature, she has been spirited away, as Thomas the Rhymer had been before her, to dwell with fairies in Fairyland. It is a fairyland calm and holy as Paradise itself. But, in the midst of its more than earthly beauties and wonders, her heart yearns to her home. Then the spirits lull her once more to sleep; she wakes in the greenwood where she had lain down, her bosom decked with flowers, and thus it comes about that

> 'When scarce was remember'd Kilmeny's name,
> Late, late, in a gloamin' Kilmeny came hame.'

But she is not destined to remain among her kindred, and when a 'month and a day have come and gone' she returns to her lair in the wood, and laying her down on the green leaves, is ravished away—this time to return no more.

Hogg is a poet who, generally speaking, addresses himself rather to the ear than to the eye, though in this respect the passage quoted above cannot be called characteristic. But undoubtedly the crowning merit of *Kilmeny* lies in the ideal marriage of the music and the theme. Speaking on the favourable side, Hogg's narrative verse in general may be described as possessing the sweetness of Moore's without its tendency to cloy, and the fluency of Praed's without his triviality. But here the Shepherd rises to a higher strain, and the characteristic of his melody is wistfulness—the wistfulness of a gentle and tender heart which strains towards a purer world, and anon looks back with yearning upon the warm and beating hearts left far behind. And thus, whilst conceived on a far higher plane of moral feeling, *Kilmeny* is no less a success of unstudied art than the poem considered just previously.

No doubt the allegorical and prophetic visions of the death of Queen Mary, the religious wars, and the French Revolution—suggested probably by the old poem of *Thomas of Erceldoune*,[1] and exhibited to Kilmeny in fairy-land, as in a glass—are a somewhat bold experiment. But they are justified by success. The picture of the various unfriendly animals drawn round the maiden whilst she sings, and herding together in a concord as of the fabled infancy of a world, is in fine contrast to the lurid study of animal life in *The Witch of Fife*—a Savery beside a David Teniers. The poem ranking next in interest to the two here discussed is probably the fairy-tale entitled *Old David*. The prize in the contest, however, is awarded to Gardyn, the second bard.

To return from the book to the author. Notwithstanding the success—great in degree, if, as yet, limited in extent—which had at once greeted *The Queen's Wake*, three or nominally four editions of the poem would seem to have been published without putting money into the author's pocket. This was principally due to the commercial failure of the publisher, Goldie. At the time when the third edition was called for, that disaster being imminent, Hogg had sought to save himself by privately transferring the book to Constable, justifying his conduct upon the ground that, as the book was his property, he had a right to do with it as he liked—a plea best adapted to a world exempt from preconceived notions. But when the Shepherd's glorious inexperience is considered, in conjunction with other circumstances of the case, a breach of professional etiquette on his part will not be too severely censured. In the sequel, the energetic protests of Goldie, who got wind of the scheme, prevented its taking effect. The new edition was published in his name, and less than a week afterwards he failed. 'Thus,'

[1] Edited by Dr J. A. H. Murray for the Early English Text Society.

says Hogg, 'all the little money that I had gained, which I was so proud of, and on which I depended for my subsistence, and the settling of some old farming debts that were pressing hard upon me, vanished from my grasp at once.'[1] This, it will be seen, is the poet's own account of the matter; but Mr Craig-Brown assures us that his profits were not so much reduced as he, 'with characteristic inaccuracy,' asserts.[2] The Messrs Blackwood now came to his rescue, taking over the copies of the book which had remained unsold by Goldie, and giving them out as a 'fourth edition.' But still by his own account the poor poet profited nothing.[3] Nor did a bid for the favour of the Princess Charlotte, made through the dedication of the fifth edition, prove more successful. It is only fair, however, to say that there exists another version of the story of the dealings with Goldie—the hostile pamphlet already more than once referred to, which publishes a statement signed by him, denying on his authority certain of the assertions of Hogg. It thus appears that the grounds of complaint were not on Hogg's side only. It would seem that, over the abortive *Spy*, he had already alienated one publisher, as we have seen that for good reasons of his own he had deserted another; and it is quite probable that, as an Ishmaelite in the world of letters, with excepting Scott no trusty friend to back him, he may have failed to recognise or at least to practise that prudence which generally prompts the struggling author to use every *ménagement* with his publisher. It is even possible that he may have been yet more seriously at fault. Certainly that genial egotism and indiscretion of tongue of his would not make him the friend of all. And thus, as has been suggested,

[1] *Autobiography*, p. xlv. [2] *History of Selkirkshire*, vol. i. p. 344.
[3] *Autobiography*, p. xlvii.

there may have been extenuating circumstances on the side of Goldie, whom Hogg flatly accuses of having used him very badly.[1] Still the hardship to Hogg remains undiminished. And in our desire to be perfectly impartial, we are by no means sure that we have not assigned too much weight to the statements of a publication of obviously virulent hostility—one which does not scruple to make what capital it can out of such low witticisms on the poet's name as are contained in the words and allusions 'porcine,' 'swineherd' (for shepherd), 'related to Bacon.' Such gutter literature is generally best left in its native obscurity; but in the present instance it actually serves our purpose, for, with the best will in the world, with one notable exception it wholly fails to bring forward anything against Hogg which tends in any respect to lower him in our estimation. That one exception is the regrettable fact that in later times he forfeited the esteem of Grieve, who, during his early days in Edinburgh, had stood so heroically his friend, but who afterwards came to speak of regarding his character (we learn not why) with 'unmingled contempt.'[2] 'Alas! they had been friends in youth.' On the other hand it is pleasant to quote the testimony of Mr James Gray, who writes of Hogg as 'not only one of the most original poets, but one of the most worthy men this country ever produced.'[3]

[1] Scott, in the course of a kind and wise letter to the Shepherd (*Memorials*, p. 137), says that Goldie 'certainly had reason to complain.'

[2] The *Life* of the Ettrick Shepherd Anatomized, p. 21.

[3] Letter quoted in *Memorials*, p. 62.

CHAPTER IV

PECUNIARY disappointments were, however, but April clouds in the habitually serene weather of the Shepherd's life. For, first and last, James Hogg was a happy man. And perhaps only those who have written many biographical sketches will realize how rare a thing it is to find a poet of whom this may truly and consistently be said. No doubt, by way of compensation, some strings of the perfect lyre were in his case mute or missing, and those—strings of deepest tone and most prolonged vibration. But in a world where 'most men' are cradled out of misery into song, we may almost count the loss as gain.

Among Hogg's healthy enjoyments at this period was an annual tour in his well-loved Highlands, where he combined the pleasures of travel with those of visiting a circle of friends now increasing in size and social importance. During the summer of 1814, whilst he was visiting at Kinnaird House in Athole, his hostess, the wife of Mr Chalmers Izett, made a graceful use of her feminine influence to incite him to poetical production. He objected that he had nothing to write about. But she would not hear him. 'How can you be at a loss for a subject,' she returned, 'and that majestic river rolling beneath your eyes?' Accordingly it was arranged between them that Hogg should write a poem on the Tay. Two years later, in a letter written from Meggernie Castle[1] in Glen Lyon, he speaks of having traced the Tay and some of its tributaries to their sources, and

[1] *Memorials*, p. 69.

having now 'fixed all the scenery for his next and greatest poetical work.' Combining the practical with the speculative, he had in the meantime taken 'nearly a hundred dozen of trouts,' wading, at a moderate computation, at least a hundred miles to do so. The poem thus originated and studied was published later under the title of *Mador of the Moor*. But, despite elaborate preparations, the poet was hardly destined again, in a long composition, to touch the poetical high-water-mark reached in the best of the component parts of *The Queen's Wake*. During the same period, he planned a volume of poetical tales which were to bear the title of *Midsummer Night's Dreams*, one of which was afterwards published as *The Pilgrims of the Sun*.

It is pleasant to record that in the meantime he had begun to reap, in tangible form, the fruits of his poetic labours. In their humble cottage at Ettrick-house, his father and mother had reached a very advanced age, and he, being a dutiful son and anxious that they should share in his improving circumstances,[1] had made more than one effort to obtain a small holding under the Duke of Buccleuch, with a view to providing a home for them. Unfortunately, his mother—to whom his genius owed so much—passed away, in her eighty-third year, before his plans for her benefit could be realized. He had, however, succeeded in enlisting the interest of the Duchess of Buccleuch, whose bounty, when Countess of Dalkeith, he had already experienced. In her last illness, this lady, who died in 1814, recommended the care of the poet's welfare to the Duke. The bereaved husband did not neglect her charge, and the result was that Hogg, writing to his old friend Laidlaw in the commencement of 1815, was able to

[1] He had ere this obtained work on at east one magazine. *Autobiography*, p. xlvi.

announce the receipt of a letter from his Grace, which granted him, on 'a nominal rent,' the occupancy of the farm of Altrive Lake on Yarrow. 'Never,' says he, 'was a more welcome boon conferred on an unfortunate wight, as it gave me once more a habitation among my native moors and streams, where every face was that of a friend and each house was a home.' This description may strike the reader as contrasting somewhat sharply with the writer's strictures on the district at the time of his departure for Edinburgh. But the contrast only tends to show that the poet's gloom and sunshine proceed from within; whilst, in Hogg's case, as has been already said, the clouds were not long in blowing over. He further gratefully acknowledges the fact that his father is now provided with a home for the remainder of his life. The elder Hogg is said to have died at Altrive Lake in the ninety-third year of his age.[1]

In the spring of 1815, the poet entered upon possession of the little farm, which was to be his home for many future years: better had it been for him if he had never had another. The farm-house stood pleasantly on the right bank of Yarrow, the wide open hillscape around it.[2] Here John Wilson, whose acquaintance—productive of such remarkable results—had been eagerly sought by

[1] *Memorials*, p. 83. There is a discrepancy here, for the tombstone in Ettrick Churchyard records that Robert Hogg, born in 1720, died in the ninety-third year of his age, *i.e.* not later than 1813. It is also said that Margaret Hogg, born in 1730, died in her eighty-third year. But the letter of Hogg to the Duchess, quoted in Thomson's *Memoir*, p. xxxvii., shows that they were both alive in 1814.

[2] Some remains of it, including the kitchen and the study—the room in which Hogg died—have been incorporated in a modern farm-house, the name of which has been changed to Eldinhope. The Lake —probably never more than a 'moss'—has been drained.

Hogg after the publication of *The Isle of Palms*[1]—visited him in the following June, finding him attired in pastoral garb, his occupation of the moment the bottling of whisky. The situation of the farmhouse Wilson describes as good and capable of being made very pretty, but the house itself he calls 'not habitable.'[2] This is borne out by the Shepherd's biographer, who speaks of the 'auld clay biggin' as so accessible to the winds that every available plaid had to be hung up before the door as a screen from draughts. None the less we are told that many a happy hour was spent there, and we can well believe it. The Shepherd had 'those feelings of a gentleman which are found naturally associated with genius,' and his disposition being hospitable even to a fault, he dispensed most appetizing cheer, among which oat-cakes, Yarrow mutton and trout, grouse and fried parr, are especially mentioned as figuring. Here, too, he received some of the best company in the land, meeting Wordsworth when the latter paid his deferred visit to Yarrow, and acting as his guide. The painter Wilkie he greeted with what Scott described as the 'finest compliment ever paid to man.' 'This is no the great Mr Wilkie?' said he, and, on being assured that his visitor was no other, grasping his hand and with eyes glistening with pleasure, he exclaimed, 'Mr Wilkie, I cannot tell you how proud I am to see you in my house, and how glad I am to see you are so young a man!' A single servant-maid attended to his wants, and here it may be mentioned that an aged woman, Margaret Scott by name, who had acted in this capacity, died quite recently in Selkirk. She was of a good Scottish type of character, supporting herself in decent poverty to the last; and to the last her favourite theme of conversation was Hogg, whose praises she was never tired of singing. He was the idol of her memory; the period she had spent in his service

[1] In 1812. [2] *Memoir of Christopher North*, vol. i. p. 186.

was the proud historical episode of her poor old life. Another old woman, Tibby Shiels, the landlady famous in her day of the neighbouring cottage-hostel on St Mary's Loch, spoke always in the present writer's memory with dignity of 'Mr Hogg,' though it is said that her practical and uncompromising Scottish mind would sometimes qualify her praise of him with the words, 'for a' the nonsense that he wrait, Hogg was a gey sensible man—in some things.'[1]

In course of time, the poet's literary earnings enabled him to erect a substantial new cottage on his farm.[2] In giving his orders for the same, his principal instruction to the architect was that he should so arrange the apartments that 'a' the reek should come out at ae lum.' The object of this was to avoid giving any external indication as to whether the master were at home or not; for, lonely as were his surroundings, his reputation was already beginning to attract more visitors to Altrive than were at all times convenient. As years went on, this tax on his time and resources grew heavier; but his genial, sociable nature made him incapable of denying himself to those who asked for him.

The first literary scheme he had undertaken at Altrive had not succeeded quite in the way he had intended. Having been placed in a farm, he found that the next thing was to stock it; and, as he had no money for the purpose, it occurred to him how this might also be done at the expense of his friends. Nothing so serviceable as a friend! The plan he had imagined was to get each of the leading poets of the day to contribute a poem to a *recueil*, which should then be sold for his profit—certainly for ingenuity, if that were all, a suitable plan enough. With characteristic energy, he speedily obtained poems

[1] Craig-Brown's *Selkirkshire*, i. 392.

[2] The outlay on building it is alluded to as a cause of impecuniosity in a letter of August 1819. (*Memorials*, p. 121.)

from Wordsworth, Southey, Wilson, Lloyd, Pringle and others, besides promises from Byron and Rogers. But Scott, feeling perhaps that the virtue of perseverance is not exhibited to best advantage in the practice of asking favours, refused to send him even so much as a single verse, and probably emphasized his refusal with the dry Scots proverb, 'Let every herring hing by its ain heid.' That occasional lack of fineness of perception which was an undoubted characteristic of Hogg's was now further displayed in the insistency with which he pressed his request, basing it partly on what to him appeared the sufficient ground, that Scott had never in his life refused him anything before. Finding, however, that he was not to attain his object, he yielded with almost childish impulsiveness to a fit of temper and sent his friend what he himself describes as 'a very abusive letter.' Without Scott's co-operation he felt that his scheme must fall to the ground. But now is seen the ready resource of the man. In the waving of a wand, he has transformed his plan of action, and, as he cannot have the assistance of one of the leading poets, he resolves to be altogether independent. Within the space of three weeks he has produced the bulk of a volume of 'poetical imitations,' in which the style of the chief living poets is taken off, and three months later, and still within the year 1815, *The Poetic Mirror* is published, of which a first edition is sold off in six weeks!

Remarkable as is the history of its production, the new volume need scarcely detain us. All readers of the delightful *Rejected Addresses* will agree that the frank parody has its place in literature, though it is a place which ought never to be a large one. But the 'poetical imitation'—a thing, at the best, of sheer barren cleverness and the weariness bred thereof—has no place in literature at all. And the poems in this volume—though innocent, of course, except as indicating some lack of respect in the

author for his calling—are simply unblushing forgeries. One of them—that on Byron—when read aloud by Ballantyne to a large literary gathering, is said to have imposed on everybody but the reader. But the only one which possesses any interest for ourselves is Hogg's imitation of his own archaisms and 'witch poetry,' entitled *The Gude Greye Katte*. The author was probably quite content that his book had served the purpose for which it was intended; so we may be the same, and thus dismiss it.

Hogg's literary interests were now rapidly multiplying. An illustrated fifth edition of *The Queen's Wake*, planned for the author's profit, was published by Blackwood,[1] whilst an English edition was issued by John Murray.[2] The prose novelette of *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*[3] was probably in hand after 1816, but, at least up to that year, Hogg, who was working steadily, seems still to have looked to poetry as his mainstay. In 1815 he brought out the long and elaborate poem, already alluded to, which he entitled *The Pilgrims of the Sun*. It may perhaps be described as an attempt to reincarnate Kilmeny —that 'standard of despair' which he had himself set up for himself, and which—in words put into his mouth by Wilson[4]—he carried for ever in the arms of his heart. The heroine of the new poem is Mary Lee, a lovely girl of pensive nature, who, being visited by an angelic form, rises from earth in the spirit in his company, her body remaining prostrate in a trance. But here Hogg's fluency runs away with him; the need of that scholarship which would have taught him the value of the *labor limae* is fatally felt. The choice of subject, too, is for him a peculiarly unhappy one, for restraints were what for his own advantage he should have sought, whereas instead

[1] *Autobiography*, p. 48. [2] *Memorials*, p. 103.
[3] Published 1818. [4] *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, January 27th, 1831.

he leaves them behind him, and expatiates at large in air. The result is a poetic chaos, amid which scattered images of beauty—for these are not wanting—lose almost all their value. Even Shelley, a many times greater poet, as his *Witch of Atlas* proves, was not more than half successful in a similar attempt; and without undue disrespect it may be confessed that the final impression left by the *Pilgrims of the Sun* is not altogether unlike that left by the poem which Christopher Smart wrote in the mad-house: we are not quite sure whether we have been reading a rhapsody of an unusually sublime cast, or—something very different indeed. The publishers Constable and Murray had both fought shy of it, and even Hogg himself at a later date poked some sly fun at it.

Before the month of May of 1816, *Mador of the Moor*, another poem of very considerable dimension, had issued from the press. Its inception has been already touched on. But the present pace, which might have put even Galt to the blush, was impossible to sustain. The author of *The Provost*, it is true, would produce a three-volume novel in a *tour de main*; but here was Hogg dashing off epics. And as Galt did somewhat later in his historical novels, so Hogg in this poem seems to have set himself up in deliberate rivalry with Scott, with special reference to the Wizard's *Lady of the Lake*. The new work deals, through the vehicle of the Spenserian stanza, with a story of the gallantry and marriage of one of the errant lover-kings of Scotland. But it is a thankless task to attempt, except with very strong motives, to resuscitate what the world has been content to forget. The age we live in is an overcrowded one, and the responsibility of merely cumbering a reader's mind is not to be lightly entered upon. Our object, then, in a sketch such as the present, is not so much to present a *catalogue raisonné* of a writer's works, as, so far as may be, to set in high relief such of

these as may deserve that eminence—the works, that is, by which Hogg really won and deserved his reputation. We have no fear that the happy reader who reads for love or idleness will be deterred by us from dipping in these not too pellucid depths for such pearls as they may conceal. And we may add that it is the fortune and reward of such well-graced adventurers that they seldom dip entirely in vain. But this being premised, and always excepting Hogg's later lyrics—to be afterwards dealt with—there now remains but one metrical production of his which need here be named—*Queen Hynde*, a massive poem, concerned with the earliest ages of our country and many strange things that then befell. After this, Hogg's muse, who now found herself a good deal neglected by the public, expired of sheer over-exercise and loose guidance. 'From that day to this,' says he, 'save now and then an idle song to beguile a leisure hour, I have never written another line of poetry.'[1]

For all his unquestioned talent and sincere devotion to poetry, the Ettrick Shepherd was not a strong enough man to rise to the conception or the enterprise of a great career in literature. At that day there was certainly more of hap-hazard writing to keep him in countenance than there would be say in ours, for new canons of criticism were still a-wanting, which should take the place of those of the Eighteenth Century, now rapidly being discredited. But if he had indeed laid aside his singing-robes for good, and that with scarcely a sigh, there were now other literary interests to occupy Hogg's attention. The publisher Blackwood has been already mentioned as having come forward to assist him at the time of Goldie's failure. That extremely shrewd and able gentleman was now pushing fast to the front, and, among the distinguished men with

[1] *Autobiography*, p. lxii.

whom he became associated, the Ettrick Shepherd was in point of time the first.[1] The Shepherd has indeed claimed the honour of having been the 'beginner and almost sole instigator' of *Blackwood's Magazine*[2]; but it seems more exact to say that the idea of the new periodical arose simultaneously in the minds of Hogg, Thomas Pringle, and the proprietor. The *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine* was started with Pringle as joint-editor with one Cleghorn, and Hogg, who objected to Cleghorn's partnership, by his own desire as mere 'occasional contributor.' But a disagreement quickly arising between Blackwood and his editors, in October 1817 the magazine was placed on a new footing, and from this period Hogg comes forward much more prominently in connexion with it.

His principal associates in the enterprize were, of course, John Wilson—whose visit to Altrive Hogg returned in Westmorland—and John Gibson Lockhart; and it requires but small penetration to see that, neither in character nor literary reputation, did the Shepherd profit by the connexion. At once greatly his juniors in age and his superiors in station and education, the redoubtable 'Scorpion' and 'Leopard' were in a position to exercise great influence over him, and that influence—during this the period of their intellectual intoxication, the seed-time of their literary wild-oats—was anything rather than a fortunate one. For in Hogg—side by side with so much that was simple-hearted, good-natured, lovable, side by side also with what we may almost describe as a blind upward aspiration—there was undeniably a certain tendency to loudness, a certain self-complacency which when it ceased to be naïf became tiresome; and this which his residence in Edinburgh had done not a little to foster. These constituted the reverse side of his character, that is all; and happy,

[1] *William Blackwood and his Sons*, vol. i. p. 35.

[2] *Autobiography*, p. lxiii.

we repeat, is the man who has no greater cause to fear exposing that reverse side. But this reverse side, better kept in subordination, the influence of the irresponsible 'North' and his brilliant congener undoubtedly tended to educe into prominence. So much for their effect upon his character; now as to reputation. Mrs Gordon, in her *Life* of her Father,[1] after remarking that Hogg was a very frequent contributor to the new magazine, goes on to say that 'in addition to his own genuine compositions, he got the *credit* of numberless performances, both in prose and verse, which he had never beheld till they appeared under his name.' This, it appears, forsooth! was a part of a system of mystification practised in the management of the magazine, which has never been carried so far in any other publication. But this also at once shows us Hogg in the character of *souffre-douleur*, and reveals to what extent his easy good-nature was imposed on. And when the, in a literary sense, notoriously licentious character of *Blackwood* in its early days is recalled, it must at once be acknowledged that the word 'credit,' italicized by ourselves above, is double-edged.

Mr Andrew Lang, having had access to documents not available to Mrs Gordon, inclines in his *Life of Lockhart*[2] to lay the heavier share of *Blackwood's* early indiscretions at Wilson's door, and it was certainly Wilson who took the greatest liberties with Hogg's name. Lockhart was content with 'quizzing' him upon all occasions, or, as the Shepherd himself puts it, never telling him the truth 'a' his days but aince, an' that was merely by chance.'[3] In the course of the next few years, the *Noctes Ambrosianæ* became the chief feature of the

[1] *Memoir of Christopher North*, vol. i. p. 268.

[2] Vol. i. pp. 135, 136.

[3] Note on Lockhart appended to the *Autobiography*.

magazine, and in these celebrated dialogues the principal part was borne by the Shepherd. The situation thus brought about was probably unique in literature, for here was a writer of established reputation made to figure month after month as the mouth-piece of remarks and opinions of which he had generally as little previous knowledge as any other member of the public. His own account of the matter was that the *Noctes* were contrived for the sole purpose of putting into his mouth all the sentiments which the writers durst not express in their own persons.[1] It may be suggested that, since the Shepherd submitted to this treatment, no one else had grounds to complain of it. And no doubt Hogg's child-like vanity was gratified by the notoriety it afforded him. Yet, this notwithstanding, he came to loggerheads with Wilson over the matter.[2] The genial Christopher did not, however, take his friend's tantrums very seriously, and seems on the whole to have regarded him as a man with whom it was scarcely possible to 'go too far.' On the other hand, he claims in a letter to Hogg that the *Noctes* have spread the fame of the latter over the four quarters of the globe. There are persons, doubtless, who would not have cared for fame of that particular kind; but the Shepherd was not nice in such matters. It is undeniable that a warm and scarcely interrupted friendship subsisted between the two men all the time, and certainly nothing is further from our wishes than to exaggerate the extent, or misrepresent the kind, of the injury done to Hogg by the *Noctes*. In a world where high spirits and intellectual horse-play ruled, the every-day standards cannot fairly be applied. Our point, then, is simply that the *Noctes Ambrosianæ* tended to send abroad a very false impression of Hogg, and have to some extent tended to perpetuate it. Hear on this

[1] Note on Lockhart appended to the *Autobiography*.

[2] See *Memoir of Christopher North*, vol. ii. p. 217.

matter an authority no less unbiassed—or, at least, unbiassed in our favour—than the editor of the standard edition of North's Works. After stating that there were about Hogg a 'homely heartiness of manner,' and a 'Doric simplicity' of address which were 'exceedingly prepossessing,' and after admitting that he was 'in all respects a very remarkable man,' that writer continues—'In his social hours, a *naïveté* and a vanity which disarmed displeasure by the openness and good-humour with which it was avowed, played over the surface of a nature which at bottom was sufficiently shrewd and sagacious; but his conversational powers were by no means pre-eminent. He never, indeed, attempted any colloquial display, although there was sometimes a quaintness in his remarks, a glimmering of drollery, a rural freshness, and a tinge of poetical colouring, which redeemed his discourse from commonplace, and supplied to the consummate artist who took him in hand the hints out of which to construct a character at once original, extraordinary, and delightful —a character of which James Hogg undoubtedly furnished the germ, but which, as it expanded under the hands of its artificer, acquired a breadth, a firmness, and a power to which the bard of Mount Benger had certainly no pretension.'[1] So, then, it is acknowledged by the advocate of the other side that the real and ideal Shepherds are two very different persons. That writer's object is, of course, to do full justice to Wilson's creative power. An enthusiastic appreciation of Wilson's creation follows, with which we have already dealt, in a somewhat summary manner, in another place.[2] It is the editor's opinion that Hogg's 'surest passport to immortality is his embalmment in the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*.' But here, surely, is one of those literary prophecies against indulging in which a critic

[1] Professor Ferrier's Preface to the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, p. xvii.

[2] See *The Blackwood Group* (Famous Scots Series), pp. 44, 45.

can scarcely be too much upon his guard. Emitted in 1855, it is in 1899 already falsified. Hogg's work, ravaged by time as in parts it is, has nevertheless withstood wear and tear much better than Wilson's; but, to leave that side of the question altogether out of consideration, I fancy that, judging his character on its merits, there are few to-day who will not set the simple, kindly, unsophisticated farmer of Yarrow—as he stands, 'in his rights of a man,' owing nothing to art, his imperfections on his head—very high above the sham Arcadian, the fatuous amorist of his own eloquence, the maudlin retailer of tirades *ad libitum* over whisky-punch in a tavern.

It is possible that our own opinion here may be at fault, but there is one whose judgment in this matter is bound to command respect—the true and loving wife whom a few years later the Shepherd was to bring home to Altrive. Mrs Hogg, says her daughter, survived her husband thirty-five years, but, 'to the last day of her gentle life,' the recollection of certain of the *Noctes* would make 'her pulse beat faster and her eye sparkle with a wife's indignation.'[1] Evidently the loyal lady had no conceit of the fine feathers derived from Wilson, and said to have been sported for her husband's benefit. Was she wrong, or was the world to be credited with clearer vision than she supposed? There are other testimonies tending to the same result. The Shepherd of the *Noctes*, says his daughter, in gentle remonstrance, was not 'the Shepherd his own home knew.' Many of his friends endeavoured to incite him to resent the travesty, but having never, with one exception, discovered any evil design in the matter, he was content in his own simple and good-natured way, to regard it all as 'excellent sport.'[2]

We have, however, allowed this digression to carry us

[1] *Memorials*, p. 139. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 140.

far ahead of our story. The disagreement between Hogg and Professor Wilson did not occur until after 1829; but it was in the seventh issue of the new magazine that the celebrated *Translation of an Ancient Chaldee Manuscript* saw the light. Such credit as belongs to the authorship of that much-canvassed *jeu d'esprit* was claimed by Hogg. This does not, however, amount to much, and his friends should be more concerned in insisting on the fact that the paper, after leaving his hands in Yarrow, received various additions from others who were not wont to be scrupulous. This literary bombshell constituted a veiled attack upon the rival magazine now conducted by Blackwood's discarded editors, and was made the vehicle of some gross personalities. Hogg protests that he never dreamed of giving offence by his share in the article, in proof of which he mentions that he did not even keep it a secret from the amiable Thomas Pringle, who—to his own credit be it said—continued on terms of warm friendship with him at a much later date.

About this time he published, in a two-volume collection, his best known prose tale, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck.* The action of this story is located at the farm of Chapelhope on the Loch of the Lowes, at Gameshope above Loch Skene, and at other places in the author's native district; the period is the reign of James the Second, when the 'despot's champion,' Claverhouse, is endeavouring to dragoon the Covenanters into conformity. A notorious misdoer, Mass John Binram, the 'curate' of St Mary of the Lowes, has been mysteriously shot—a summary act of justice which brings the arch-persecutor in person into the neighbourhood. The story then turns upon the concealment of a remnant of Covenanters in a cavern among the hills, where their material needs are ministered to by the daughter of the farmer of Chaphl-

hope, a high-spirited and devoted lass, who in this manner brings herself under suspicion of trafficking with the powers of darkness. Unlike the majority of Hogg's stories, the merit of this one lies less in the treatment of supernatural incident than in humorous delineation of rustic character. The honest and burly Goodman of Chapelhope, with 'strength of airm' as his resort in the difficulties of life; the two shepherd bodies—Davie Tait with his truly astounding gift of prayer, and old John of Muchrah—and the Highland serjeant Macpherson, are all capital sketches of character; whilst Jasper, Old Nannie, Maron Linton, and others are scarcely, if at all, less life-like. There is a good humorous scene, which we regret to be unable to quote, when the supposed Brownie has created a panic at Riskinhope, and the inmates of the house exchange terrified comments whilst crouching in a confused heap in the nearest available place of safety. But, indeed—whatever faults the author may commit—he seldom fails to tell his story with conviction, or to make his characters express themselves in the most natural manner in the world, as well as in the raciest of Border Scots. Where he *does* fail is in the conduct of his narrative, which is rambling to the point of perplexity, if not indeed of actual incoherence. In later work this defect was corrected.

The Brownie of Bodsbeck was the occasion of a little scene between Hogg and Scott, which, as recounted by the former, serves to illustrate the relations between them. On the day following its publication, Hogg, calling on his friend on the pretence of asking advice, but in reality to hear his opinion of the new work, found the novelist's shaggy eyebrows hanging low over his eyes, which he knew to be an ominous sign. And, in fact, Scott did not wait long to inform him that he liked the story 'very ill indeed,' considering it to be an unfair and exaggerated

picture of the times and historical characters represented. Hogg defended himself by urging, plausibly enough, that it was the picture he himself had received from tradition, protesting that there was no one incident in the tale which he could not prove out of history to be literally and positively true. To meet the exigencies of his plot, he might have 'changed situations'—by which we ought probably to understand 'shifted localities'; but he declared that that was all. And then, carrying the war into the enemy's country, he added that this was more than could be said for *Old Mortality*. But Scott, whose authorship of the novels was still unavowed, was too wide-awake to be drawn into this trap, and the Shepherd—lest there should be any suspicion of a debt on his part—proceeded to announce the actual priority of composition, though not of publication, of his own story. Scott had not much to say on this point, but contented himself with repeating that, excepting the character of Old Nanny, he disliked the tale exceedingly, and that as a picture of the Royalist party it was 'distorted, prejudiced, and untrue.' Here Hogg's temper must certainly have gotten the better of him, for he had nothing more effective to say in reply than that his story was 'a devilish deal truer' than the other, after which he was leaving the room in a huff when Scott stopped him, crying, 'No, no! you are not to go and leave me again in a bad humour. You ought not to be offended with me for telling you my mind freely.' 'Why, to be sure,' answered the Shepherd, 'it is the greatest folly in the world for me to be sae. But ane's beuks are like his bairns, he disna like to hear them spoken ill o'—especially when he is conscious that they dinna deserve it.' The matter ended by his remaining to dinner. There is something particularly human and genial about this little scene of passing irritability, and, though Scott may come the best out

of it, I think that its effect is to make us like both men the better.[1]

Hogg was now busy with his *Jacobite Relics of Scotland*, a collection of old Jacobite songs, the two volumes of which saw the light respectively in 1819 and 1821. The undertaking had owed its origin to a suggestion made at a Meeting of the Highland Society in London, and various collectors of old songs—among whom the chief was Scott—had placed their portfolios at the disposal of Hogg, who had been chosen to act as editor. His method of procedure was to choose or to construct from among the various readings of each song one which pleased himself, adding the music—which he had sought out from old manuscripts or from rural musicians—and illustrating the whole with copious notes. The First Series of the *Relics* consists of songs dating earlier than the battle of Sheriff-muir, and the editor, referring to that period, remarks on its scarcity of Scottish Whig songs worthy of preservation.[2] His method of editing was rightly not so rigidly historical as to exclude the *Hame, hame, hame*, and other 'forgeries' of his old acquaintance, Allan Cunningham.

Before the publication of the second volume of the *Relics*, Hogg had entered the married state. At first sight it is a matter for surprise that so ardent and loyal an admirer of the sex should have reached his fiftieth year before taking this step. But that is a dutiful old custom among the Scottish peasantry which keeps at least one member of a family single until his or her parents require caring for no longer. Hogg's father and mother were now dead; he was comfortably settled in his farm, and 'in a fair way of doing' with his pen; the vigour of his frame, the elasticity of his step, and the buoyancy of his

[1] *Domestic Manners of Sir Walter Scott*, pp. 36, *et seq.*

[2] *Jacobite Relics*, Introduction.

spirit were, as Mr Craig-Brown remarks, unabated, and it was in every way fit that he should take a wife. Favour in wooing was not in his case 'fashious to seek,' and, within recent years, his well-wishers had more than once looked him out a suitable mistress for his household. Their solicitude was, however, thrown away. In these matters the prudent Scot is wont to keep his own counsel, and it seems that for about ten years past the poet had been carrying on some sort of courtship of the lady who now became his wife. This was Miss Margaret Phillips, the younger daughter of a farmer belonging to a good family which had been long established in Annandale,—a lady of social standing superior to his own, and some twenty years his junior, whom Hogg had met frequently at the house of her brother-in-law, his friend Mr Gray, in Edinburgh. Miss Phillips, who is spoken of as a 'belle,' had had plenty of suitors in her own neighbourhood; but we judge that Hogg had occupied the ground before them, and her instinct guided her truly. A few of his love-letters have been preserved, and the following passage, quoted from one of them, shows that, however thoughtlessly high his spirits might run at times, he could be tenderly grave and sensible when the occasion required it :—

'Some things that you said to me set me a-thinking,' he writes in November 1819, 'and that very seriously, and I am not yet convinced of the prudence of our marriage, considering my years and the uncertain state in which I hang, as it were between poverty and riches. For God's sake consult further with your father, for I have no one to consult on the subject, and have got some very urgent remonstrances against it. Indeed, your father is the only man whom I would consult, knowing that he has your happiness at heart, and would, I am sure, advise what he judges best.'[1] When we remember the circumstances of

[1] *Memorials*, pp. 124, 125.

the correspondents, the spirit of this letter strikes us as wisely loving and disinterested. The correspondence is interspersed with more matter-of-fact passages; which, however, is no bad augury for future happiness. The course of the true love of Hogg and his sweetheart did not run perfectly smooth, and, as we see, grave doubts were entertained as to the wisdom of their marriage. But, in spite of these, it took place, being celebrated in April 1820, at the old mansion-house of Mousewald, in Dumfriesshire, the residence of the bride's father. It was a love-match, and, in its own way, a romance, and it is pleasant to record that it proved a perfectly happy union.

CHAPTER V

At his marriage the Ettrick Shepherd entered upon what may be described as the second period of tranquillity in his life. His domestic existence was smooth and happy, and the little ones soon began to grow up and run about around him. His correspondence testifies to the pleasantness of his friendships; whilst of visitors come out to look upon the man, there were probably more than was quite good either for his pocket or his productive powers. For, though Hogg had chosen to make his habitation in the wilderness, he had about him nothing of the De Sénancour. He joined eagerly in the amusements of the neighbourhood; his advent was hailed with delight at local gatherings, and, besides being a keen sportsman, he was in particular an ardent votary of the ever-popular 'roaring game.' Lockhart also gives a pleasing picture of him, attired in the doublet of Lincoln green and broad blue bonnet which formed the club costume of the Bowmen of the Border, presiding as Captain at the St Ronan's athletic games at Innerleithen, and carrying off prizes for agility and prowess up to the age of three-score. On the other hand, he enjoyed an equal immunity from that no less morbid symptom, the absentee's craving for the pressure and stimulus of the great world,—in proof of which it is enough to relate that he declined an invitation to the Coronation of George IV. because it would have prevented his attending St Boswells' Fair. In a word, he was perfectly content in the place where his lot was cast—as, of a surety, well he might be. His pen, besides being abundantly and lucratively occupied

in contributing to *Blackwood's* and *Fraser's Magazines*, was busied with an aftermath of verse, to which he gave the name of *A Queer Book*,[1] and with two volumes of *Winter Evening Tales*, and was also in high request among editors of the literary 'Annuals' so much in vogue at that time. Then, as a relief from literary labour, he had plenty of out-door occupation and recreation, and indeed, but for a single factor in his circumstances, his lot, so far as we can judge, ought to have been as near perfect happiness as any given to a mortal.

But as the itch of official employment spoilt Galt's life, so the Will-o'-the-Wisp in Hogg's case was farming speculation. And now, no longer content with the seventy acres of Altrive, he must needs lease in addition to it the neighbouring farm of Mount Benger,—where for the next seven or eight years his life was to be a struggle against adverse circumstances. For the failure in which this struggle ended, various causes have been assigned. Professor Veitch attributes it to the rent of the farm being too high; but as to this, Hogg, a practical man, who had lived so to speak next-door for the last five years had the best means of judging; and, if he judged that the farm could not be made to pay, he ought surely to have left it alone. Next it is said that, during his tenancy, seasons were bad and prices low; whilst it is certain that, by the inability of his father-in-law, owing to severe losses, to pay Mrs Hogg's marriage-portion, the capital on which he calculated was reduced by £1000. But, this notwithstanding, there is probably something to be said for the view of the case expressed by Mr Borland, the present minister of Yarrow, when he states that, as a matter of fact, Hogg, though skilled in the management of sheep, 'never gave any indication of being able to farm successfully. He failed

[1] Published by Blackwood in 1822, and quaintly dedicated to Christopher North and Timothy Tickler.

every time he tried.'[1] Extravagant expenditure, not indeed upon himself, but on his too numerous guests, together with absorption in literary work, doubtless also contributed towards the final result.

It was probably at Mount Benger that most of Hogg's prose tales were written. To unearth each of these from the back numbers of *Fraser's Magazine*, or other places where they first appeared, would be a work of considerable interest as well as of considerable research; but perhaps all readers, save a few Hogg-enthusiasts, will be satisfied with the selection presented in the six-volume illustrated edition of *Tales and Sketches by the Ettrick Shepherd*.[2] For, as has been already hinted, Hogg belonged to that bounteous family of makers who, following Ovid, have left us rather too much than not enough of their work. Taking the above edition, then, as our text-book, the tales and sketches may be divided into three main classes:—namely, stories dealing with the occult or supernatural—such as the tales of dreams, or apparitions, fairies, witchcraft, and the like, in the *Shepherd's Calendar* and elsewhere; historical tales in the manner introduced by Scott, such as *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* or *The Siege of Roxburgh*; and lastly, tales and sketches illustrative of local and contemporary pastoral life, such as *The Shepherd's Wedding*, and the papers on Sheep, Sheep-dogs, Storms, and so forth. Besides these, and perhaps less noticeable or less numerous, there are such novelettes of country life as the pleasant love-tale of *The Wool-gatherer*, or the more farcical *Window Wat's Courtship*; adventure tales, as that of *Captain John Lochy* in the *Altrive Tales*, and fantasy-pieces in the manner of Defoe, such as the account of Allan Gordon's wonderful experiences in the arctic regions. Indeed, Hogg's versatility as a tale-teller

[1] *The Ettrick Shepherd Memorial Volume*, Lewis, Selkirk, 1898, p. 20.
[2] Blackie & Son, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

was almost on a par with his fertility; he tried his hand at almost every known style. The powerful *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, as they were first published in a separate volume, and have also been most recently reprinted,[1] though not differing in kind from the other stories of the supernatural, are to some extent marked off from them.

Amid such wealth of stories, to particularize is impossible; we must be content with a few remarks on the various classes of story. It is undoubtedly on his tales of the supernatural, whether told in prose or verse, that Hogg's chief claim to distinctive remembrance rests; and in respect to this he may be considered as the 'complement' of Sir Walter Scott. Both Scott and he were born, most opportunely, at a period of social transition—most pat at the meeting-point in time of the old order and the new. Scott, by a touch of his magic wand, or, to drop a trivial metaphor for the naked and much more moving fact—by the severe and life-long application of almost superhuman mental powers, effected the passage or the transfusion—clean and neat almost as in a chemist's experiment—of what must otherwise have perished in the world around him into the library which constitutes his works. Old Scottish song, old Scottish manners, Scottish tradition, Scottish legend—these he preserved; and to him, we, as Scotsmen, owe it that our sense of the Past is probably richer than that possessed by any other nation. But beside this vast field reclaimed and salvaged, there lay one department which was comparatively neglected—at any rate it lay open to receive and to repay more labour than Scott had time to give it. This was the department of the supernatural, in which—though he had selected it for his first essay in literature—Scott was never at any time an adept. Hogg came forward to

[1] Shiells & Co., 1895.

supply the deficiency, and it is in this sense that his work may be looked on as *complementary* to Scott's.

We have seen that his early education had exactly fitted him for this work. In his case, books would have been but so many impediments; and, accordingly, the atmosphere in which he grew up was one unvitiated by literature, and yet—thanks to his mother—permeated by tradition. To tradition his hungry young imagination found itself restricted; tradition he assimilated or made part of himself, and it is not until that process was complete that we hear of his bookish education beginning. And thus it seems quite possible that what he had looked on as the great hardship or misfortune of his life was, in reality, the very thing to which he owed most. The locality in which he grew up was also in his favour; for in no other part of Scotland, as Sir Walter Scott points out,[1] had the belief in fairies held its ground so pertinaciously. Indeed, as we have seen, the Shepherd's grandfather, Will o' Phaup, was even credited with having conversed with them, and with being the last in that wild region who did so. The question for us here to consider, however, is this: what was the literary effect on Hogg of these now extinct influences? The answer, as we conceive, is, in the simplest language, that Hogg tells a 'ghost-story' as no other man has told one. Nature had gifted him with a singularly large share of what in literature we may denominate the Defoe quality—the power, that is, of *feigning*, or making real in narrative that which has never been so. Others have, of course, possessed this power—every writer of fiction must in some degree possess it; but it is Hogg's peculiar distinction that he extends it beyond the limits of the world that is. And the power never fails him. By its success the Gil-Martin of the *Justified Sinner* ranks

[1] *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, vol. ii. p. 226.

as a unique attempt in our literature to incarnate the Fiend amid realistic surroundings; but in Hogg's work Gil-Martin does not stand alone. For, in their own kind and degree, the Old Man of the *Hunt of Eildon*—he whom every one remembers to have seen before, but whom none identifies—the 'jottery-man' of the Black Haggs, Tibby Johnston's wraith, the unknown figure who engages Adam Bell in sword-play behind Holyrood, and a score of others are all equally successful. Neither, again, is Hogg's success restricted to those scenes in which actually supernatural characters are brought upon the stage. It is the *atmosphere* of eeriness, that is of the supernatural, which he has always at command, and this is shown in at the least a hundred instances—of which the glamour, or *deceptio visûs* of the charming and pathetic fairy-tale of *Mary Burnet*, and the wonderful game-birds falling a prey to the sportsman of the *Strange Secret*, and directing reproachful glances upon him as they fall, may be cited, not as the most striking, but simply as the first that happen to occur to our recollection. What Hogg has done then, so far, is to endow with a permanent literary form the singularly rich and varied creations of the Scottish peasant's fancy, in so far as that fancy has applied itself to its favourite field of the supernatural; and, by thus endowing them, to preserve them when upon the brink of oblivion.

We have dwelt at length on this, the most important, group of tales; the others may be much more rapidly dismissed. In the present age of realism, such 'documents' as the papers in which the Shepherd discourses of traits of affection displayed by sheep, and other incidents of the shepherd life, are perhaps likely to appeal to a wider circle of literary readers than any others among his works. The historical tales, though excellent in their way, and especially noticeable for the success with which the author's courage carries him over difficulties, are less distinctive of

the man than those of the other groups. Others, that is, have written similar tales of not less merit, but, as a poet of the supernatural, and perhaps also as a shepherd author, Hogg stands alone. In reading his history, it is desirable to be on one's guard against the 'false document'—as, for instance, when he speaks of a trial for witchcraft of the reign of James V. as being recorded in the Melrose Chronicle—a record which closes in the year 1270. This is a mannerism to which he resorts to obtain verisimilitude, and, whether legitimate or not, it was not in his day counted reprehensible.[1]

We have spoken of Hogg in relation to Scott; there are other writers with whom he invites comparison. First, then, his peasant tales are much more interesting than those of his friend Allan Cunningham, whose work in this kind owes its literary value to other considerations rather than to pure skill in story-telling. Next, if we compare him with Hoffmann, we are at once impressed by the fact that, unlike the German's, Hogg's 'weird' is seldom or never morbid, fevered, hectic; his wild imaginings are those of a healthy man not of delirium; he does not habitually revel in studies of the diseased or the abnormal, as does Hoffmann, for instance, in his long-drawn study of the malady of the Capuchin Medardus,[2] or, again, in the marvellous and characteristic *Sandmann*, where tragic terror and a monkey-like satire and grotesqueness are set off and foiled by the masterly-sketch of a charming and affectionate girl. The story-teller, however, with whom to us Hogg most readily suggests comparison is Robert Louis Stevenson, with whose work his own presents several striking points of similarity and of contrast.

[1] He was conscious of abusing it, for he himself says, 'I have now given so many tales of *perfect truth* [his own italics] to the public, many of them with not one word of truth in them, that I know I shall not be believed in this. . . . Preface to *Lay Sermons*, 1834.

[2] In *Das Elixir des Teufels*.

Their similarity is perhaps mainly noticeable in a strongly national colouring, and in identical predilections in the choice of subject; their difference might also be chosen as the typical difference between the intuitive and the self-conscious artist. Both, then, are strongly Scottish—Hogg from the necessity of the case, but Stevenson, who had seen the world, from election; in their choice of subject both turn readily to the weird—Hogg intuitively, Stevenson from the preference of a fastidious and somewhat *blasé* artist. And, besides weirdness, a thing which attracts either is adventure, in which field their parity of limitation is also most noticeable. Hogg, who does not select, has a much greater natural fertility than Stevenson, but in both an almost pagan distaste for anything bordering on the problems of life is apparent. Allied to this, and arising doubtless from the same aversion from deep thinking in the authors, is a poverty of characterization; and in this same poverty, be it said in passing, lies perhaps the bane or ultimate death-seed of the adventure-tale. For, sooner or later, adventure of itself will pall; whilst if we care but little for the adventurer, we can scarcely be much interested in his fate. In respect to this common weakness, Stevenson, the younger man, is a greater defaulter than Hogg, who can, indeed, generally place a personality before his reader, but fails, or does not attempt, to exhibit it in a state of growth or development. An instance may be noted from *The Bridal of Polmood*, where, in the courtship and marriage of the impulsive and admiration-loving but innocent-minded Elizabeth and the elderly uncourtier-like and formidable Polmood, the author presents a really interesting dramatic situation. But, in the sequel, he simply shies away from developing it; and the same may be said of an equally promising situation in *Welldean Hall*. Compare with this Stevenson's failure to turn interest of a

similar kind to account in *The Beach of Falesà*, where a strong psychological possibility is simply dissipated in the smoke of gunpowder. Neither to Hogg nor Stevenson, be it understood, is this imputed by way of blame. For, though we may not incline to place them in the higher ranks among novelists, we may still find plenty to recognise and to enjoy in their work as tellers of adventure-stories.

So much for resemblance. As to contrast, when we remember Hogg's abounding humour, we can scarcely do otherwise than characterize his more fertile talent as also more genial than Stevenson's. For this it is possible that physical constitution may have been to some extent responsible. But, if Hogg's narrative, full, free, and flowing as it is, is apt occasionally and unconsciously to drop to commonness, that of the exile of Vailima, cramped and laboured at its worst, maintains in a general way an altogether higher level of distinction.[1] Hogg, in a word, might draw from a richer mine; but Stevenson was master of an infinitely finer art in cutting and polishing his gems. The first owed little to literary culture, or to any of his predecessors; there is hardly a writer of distinction from whom the work of the second does not bear, at some point or other, some visible trace of imitation. Hogg has greater skill, or better fortune, in surmounting difficulties or concealing defects—or perhaps we ought to say that, as the surrounding level of his work is lower, a casual falling-off does not strike us so much. At any rate his writing shows no such *écroulement* as the latter portion of the *Master of Ballantrae*. But Hogg, on the other hand, has left us no scenes approaching in clear and brilliant perfection of literary execution to, for instance, the shrubbery scene in the novel above-named, or the diving-scene in *The Merry Men*. It will of course be

[1] 'I never in my life re-wrote a page of prose,' says Hogg. (*Reminiscences of Former Years.*)

understood that these observations are applied to either writer only in his capacity as a story-teller.[1]

Hogg's literary earnings during the first two years of his tenancy of Mount Benger amounted to upwards of £750; but when the time came for him to return to Altrive, he found himself the poorer for his farming venture by no less than £2000—'a respectable sum,' as he remarks, 'for an old shepherd to throw away.' The fact was that, his capital at starting being insufficient,

[1] Before dismissing Hogg's fiction, it remains finally to dispose of a mistaken impression regarding the authorship of the *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* to which currency has been given. Basing his theory on internal evidence, and on the fact that the contributors to 'Maga' would at times collaborate without acknowledgment —Hogg, for instance, furnishing an occasional song for the *Noctes*— Mr Andrew Lang, writing in the *Illustrated London News* of November 24th, 1894, expressed the opinion that John Gibson Lockhart had had a hand in the composition of the above novel. This opinion 'as far as internal or external evidence goes' he has since revoked (*Athenæum*, November 30th, 1895), a fact the mention of which ought of itself to be enough for our present purpose. But as the opinion has since been repeated in at least one authoritative quarter, it may be as well here to place on record the following facts: First, that the manuscript of the book in question, clearly and neatly written in Hogg's hand, and showing no mark whatever of having been corrected or added to by Lockhart, exists and is in the possession of Hogg's surviving daughter, Mrs Garden; secondly, that the tale, under its later title, as the *Confessions of a Fanatic* was corrected by Hogg, along with the rest of his works, just before his death. (Letter of Mrs Garden to the *Athenæum*, November 16th, 1895.) Finally, that there exists not a jot or tittle of documentary or external evidence to support the theory of a mixed authorship; whilst, though the power of developing character shown in the work under consideration is perhaps unique in Hogg's writings, most readers will be inclined to agree with his daughter when she writes that she sees the 'mark of Hogg's pen in every line.' (Letter quoted above.) Lockhart was certainly a more accomplished man-of-letters than Hogg; but of Hogg's genius he had nothing.

at no time during his tenancy had he been clear of difficulties; and, notwithstanding desperate efforts to extricate himself,[1] he had sunk but deeper and deeper into the mire, until, at the termination of his lease—stock having by this time declined one half in value—he was left 'without a sixpence in the world.' And at the age of sixty, as he observes, it was fully late enough to begin anew. It might naturally be concluded that his misfortunes would exercise a depressing tendency upon him. Not at all: he assures us that none of these reverses ever in the smallest degree affected his spirits. . . . 'As long as I did all for the best, and was conscious that no man could ever accuse me of dishonesty, I laughed at the futility of my own calculations, and let my earnings go as they came amid contentment and happiness. . . . Indeed so uniformly smooth and happy has my married life been, that on a retrospect I cannot distinguish one part from another, save by some remarkably good days of fishing, shooting, and curling on the ice.' To the making of fortitude such as this, there goes perhaps some degree of insensibility, perhaps only a happy tendency to forget what is best forgotten.

It was, indeed, with a feeling of relief that Hogg, with his wife and children, returned to the humbler home of Altrive. His daughter, Mrs Garden, tells us that he was a 'domestic man,' and her assertion is amply borne out by such of his letters to his wife as have come down to us. Indeed, if the Hogg of Blackhouse had already succeeded in exciting our interest, it is the Hogg of Mount Benger and of the later years at Altrive who wins a place in our affection. The intervening years of victorious struggle in Edinburgh and elsewhere, though they certainly command

[1] The two three-volume novels entitled respectively *The Three Perils of Man* and *The Three Perils of Women* had been dashed off, 'as if in desperation,' in the hope of mending matters.

our admiration, do little to bring Hogg nearer to our hearts; indeed, it would be remarkable if they did not exercise some temporary hardening effect upon the poet himself. During that time, then, he has appeared to us somewhat too much like one of his own fairies—a brilliant being, gifted at once with marvellous powers and with perennial happiness, but on the whole somewhat lacking in human warmth, somewhat alien from human kinship. We would not forget that, all the while, he was a dutiful son, a good friend and brother, a faithful lover even; all we can say is that, so far as it is given us to-day to study his life, these things seem scarcely sufficient. At any rate these years are in contrast with the later development of his character. For, when once he becomes a husband and a father, all this is changed. A reflex, as it were, of the all-pervading geniality of Walter Scott seems to be set up within him, and the care of 'Margaret and the bairns' draws him back, like his own Kilmeny, from fairyland, but not like her to return thither.

We have already had evidence of his passion for field-sport; but the following humorous protest relating to that topic, and illustrative both of his skill as a letter-writer and of his life at this period, is too good not to be quoted. It is dated from Mount Benger, August 11th, 1829, and is addressed to Wilson in reply to an invitation to Elleray.

'My dear and honoured John,—I never thought you had been so unconscionable as to desire a sportsman on the 11th or even the 13th of August to leave Ettrick Forest for the bare scraggy hills of Westmoreland! Ettrick Forest, where the black cocks and white cocks, brown cocks and grey cocks, ducks, plovers, and peaseweeps and whilly-whaups are as thick as the flocks that cover her mountains, and come to the hills of Westmoreland that can nourish nothing better than a castril or stonechat!

To leave the great yellow-fin of Yarrow, or the still larger grey-locher for the degenerate fry of Troutbeck, Esthwaite, or even Wastwater! No, no, the request will not do; it is an unreasonable one, and therefore not unlike yourself; for besides, what would become of Old North and Blackwood, and all our friends for game, were I to come to Elleray just now? I know of no home of man where I could be so happy within doors with so many lovely and joyous faces around me; but this is not the season for in-door enjoyments; they must be reaped on the wastes among the blooming heath, by the silver spring, or swathed in the delicious breeze of the wilderness. Elleray, with all its sweets, could never have been my choice for a habitation, and perhaps you are the only Scottish gentleman who ever made such a choice, and still persists in maintaining it, in spite of every disadvantage. Happy days to you, and a safe return.'

Alas! amid the peaceful surroundings sketched above, the flight of time was now making itself felt. Scott's friendship for the Shepherd had of course been extended to Mrs Hogg, who, being duly introduced at Abbotsford after her marriage, had called forth warm congratulations to the Shepherd—the host remarking, with his usual playfulness where Hogg was concerned, that he wondered that the latter had had the good sense to make such a choice. Mrs Hogg returned the Wizard's admiration with something approaching adoration, in illustration of which the Shepherd tells this pretty anecdote. One day as the great man was leaving Mount Benger, after dining there, he caught up one of Hogg's little girls, kissed her, and, laying his hand on her head, said, 'God Almighty bless you, my dear child!' at which Mrs Hogg was affected to tears. On his return from escorting his guest to the carriage, her husband enquired, 'what had ailed her?' to which the good mother replied, 'O, I thought if

he had but just done the same to them all, I do not know what in the world I would not have given!' The power and charm exercised by Scott's personality among those who knew him could scarcely be more pleasingly illustrated; and there are other examples of his kindness to Hogg's family which, did space permit, one would not leave untold.

But Scott's days were now numbered. There is sincere feeling in the Shepherd's description of their last meeting. Scott, who was to pass through Yarrow on his return journey from Drumlanrig Castle to Abbotsford, and had not time to diverge from the road to visit Altrive, had sent word to Hogg, who met him at the wayside inn now known as the Gordon Arms, and assisting him out of the carriage, walked with him down the valley towards Mount Benger burn. Scott walked with difficulty, for his crippled limb had now become almost useless, so that he had to lean on his companion's shoulder, remarking as he did so that he had never leaned on a firmer or a surer. Thus proceeding, these two old friends 'talked of many things, past, present and to come.' But the sad change which had come over Scott was only too apparent to his friend. Both his memory and his power of looking forward were impaired; he often changed the subject abruptly, and never laughed. Yet still he expressed the deepest concern for his companion's welfare and success—more so even than Hogg had ever heard him do before—together with sympathy in his financial troubles. The Shepherd, reared as he had been in the superstitions of the peasantry, must have felt that his old friend was 'fey.' Both of them had had recent cause for distress or annoyance—though Hogg, as was his wont, took his share lightly enough; and it would seem that the present meeting was itself not quite exempt from the old incurable tendency to differ or to wrangle. "You are still the old man, Hogg, careless and indifferent as ever," said Scott, with a coun-

tenance as gruff and demure as could be, and went on to speak of all things, literature in particular, as going down-hill to destruction and ruin. We must remember that, if great his happiness, his trials had been scarcely less. And thus parted for the last time these two old friends and friendly antagonists, who had in truth so much in common, who so intuitively recognized each the worth and power of the other, who had so often differed and so often been appeased. In striking the balance between them, posterity, easily made captive by Scott, has been perhaps a little hard on Hogg. But one likes to conceive of the relation between them as of that of brothers—boys, for there survived in either much that was boyish. Then Scott becomes the elder and greater—instinctively watching over and protecting the somewhat petulant younger, patient of his foibles, yet occasionally seeming to delight in irritating them, admiring, and yet not sparing provocation. For so it is that with boy brothers we sometimes see the surface all discord. But we know that their affection lies deeper and is out of sight, that each is united to the other by something stronger than himself, never, in spite of himself, by any means to be alienated. The nature of Hogg's offences has perhaps been made pretty plain. His principal grounds of irritation against Scott were the consistent abstinence of the latter from recognizing him in any of his published writings; his somewhat gratuitous and unhelpful criticism of the prose pieces, his refusal to contribute to Hogg's proposed Miscellany, and his rather inconsiderate recommendation of Hogg to the post of head shepherd to Lord Porchester, the conditions of that appointment being that he should put his 'poetical talent under lock and key for ever'—[1] a condition which to a man with the Shepherd's good conceit of his own powers could not fail to be particularly galling.

[1] *Domestic Manners of Sir Walter Scott*, p. 60.

Had matters ended here, however, we have seen that all would have been well. Unfortunately they were carried one stage further. Scott having died in 1832, Hogg two years later produced the book which he entitled *Domestic Manners and Private Life of Sir Walter Scott*. This booklet forms excellent reading, and was sincerely intended, as we have no doubt, as a glorification of Sir Walter. Nor, though written with somewhat less than the customary reserve, does it contain more than two passages which could reasonably be expected to give pain or offence. The first is the somewhat unfeeling, but no doubt thoughtless, comparison of Scott's last lethargy to the condition of a drunken man; the second is the indiscreet and indelicate expression of curiosity as to the parentage of the late Lady Scott. From this error, breeding would have preserved Hogg; but surely some faults of breeding must be pardoned, nay, must be looked for, in one who is peasant born. Lockhart, however, took a different view of the case. To one affecting airs of *hauteur* and posing as an aristocrat—an aristocrat of 1830—it was doubtless wormwood to find himself and his family familiarly discussed in print by a man of Hogg's antecedents; but Hogg, be it said in passing, was ever greatly less of a respecter of persons than Scott had been. Again Lockhart himself had been served with rough justice in the *brochure*. But, to be just, one must acknowledge the latter as a man of deep affections, if of uncertain temper and overstrained nerves. Probably he was wounded in his tenderest part. At any rate, in the *Life of Scott*, Hogg is dismissed in these bitter words:—'It had been better for his fame had his end been of earlier date, for he did not follow his best benefactor until he had insulted his dust.'

From this regrettable misunderstanding, we must go back a few years. Improvident though he might be on his own

account, Hogg had given many an anxious thought to the future of his increasing family. Having himself felt the want of early mental training, he was determined, as Scott had advised, 'at every risk and at every sacrifice' to give his little ones a good education. With this object he engaged a young man of good attainments to act as tutor in his house, generously admitting the children of the neighbourhood to share with his own in the schooling.[1] But schooling was not everything. Towards the close of 1831, a London publisher, Cochrane by name, had a plan on foot for publishing an edition of the poet's collected prose works. The plan promised to be lucrative, and with the object of furthering it, Hogg was persuaded somewhat against his will to go to London, where he landed, after a tedious voyage, on the last day of the year. His fame, which the detested *Noctes* had doubtless greatly helped to spread, had preceded him, and during the three months which he spent in the capital he was a literary lion of the first magnitude. The *Morning Chronicle* of January 2nd, 1832, had announced his arrival in flattering terms, and he soon found himself, in his own phrase, 'like to be eaten up with kindness.' Indeed, as his daughter remarks, the account of his reception seems at the present day almost incredible. A list of his entertainers includes, among personages, the Duke of Sussex, Macleod of Macleod, and Lord Saltoun, among celebrities, Galt, George Cruickshank and Neil Gow, and among clubs and societies, The Beefsteak, The Literary, and The Highland. To a man of his temperament, all this could not fail to be gratifying, yet doubtless it came late enough in life to have lost something of its full charm. Writing to his wife on January 10th, he is by no means carried away by his success, but complains of the

[1] After Hogg's death, the school which had thus been founded by him was maintained by the Duke of Buccleuch.

inroads on his time which never allow him to reach home until three o'clock in the morning. I cannot describe to you,' he adds, 'how cheerless and desolate I feel so far separated from my family. If it were not absolutely necessary to make a struggle, in order to better our fortunes a little, I could not bear it.' Absence has brought out the home feelings in their strength, and his enquiries are very tender for his daughters—'dear Maggie, poor little Hetty (the delicate one), and sweet Mary.' He has a joke for the boy James, and concludes, 'I am very helpless, and would require putting to rights almost every day—my stockings all full of holes, nor do I know where to get them mended.' Soon afterwards he sent to each of the children a copy of a little manual of hymns and prayers, drawn up by himself for their use, and entitled *A Father's New Year's Gift.* His lament over the piles of dead larks observed by him when sight-seeing in one of the London provision-markets—a sight, as he says, which almost broke his heart—is also characteristic. He remembered that when he had read, in his young days, in *Bruce's Travels*, that the larks sing the same notes in Abyssinia as they do here, his thought had been that that must be 'a tolerable country after a'.' In this connexion the tuneful 'Bird of the wilderness'—the song with which he had hailed the flock of larks as it rose from Ettrick Pen toward the 'broad blue sky of Scotland'—will recur to all lovers of his lays.

The festivities in Hogg's honour culminated in a grand dinner at the Free Masons' Hall, at which his distinguished countryman General Sir John Malcolm presided. It took place on the anniversary of Burns' birthday; two of Burns' sons were present, and Hogg after dinner brewed punch in a bowl which had belonged to the Ayrshire poet and had been brought to London for the occasion. He met with a perfect ovation. After this he writes of receiving

something like three hundred invitations to dinner in three days, and makes a description of one of these functions which he attended serve as a sample of the others. Having accepted his invitation on condition that there should be no party, he would find that, ere dinner was well over, a rapping at the door would begin, which was to continue without intermission for an hour and a half. 'Then we go upstairs, and find both drawing-rooms crammed as full as ever you saw sheep in a fold. And then I am brought in and shown, like any other wild beast, all the ladies courtseying, and flattering, and begging for one shake of my hand.'

How did the Shepherd comport himself amid these unusual surroundings? Admirably, we may feel sure. Time had smoothed the ruggedness of his manners since his early Edinburgh days, and he had a native gallantry and independence of spirit which would stand him in good stead. The apparition of a son of nature in a world of artificiality is always interesting, and even Carlyle, little inclined as he was to be merciful in his judgments, was fain to acknowledge that Hogg behaved 'easily and well,' and, recognising his 'charm'—as he went along 'cheerful, mirthful, and musical,'—to speculate as to whether it may not be chiefly due to this: 'that he is a real product of nature, and able to speak naturally, which not one in a thousand is.'[1] Meantime Mrs Hogg's advice to her husband is this: 'Leave before you are threadbare. I do not exactly mean your coat, but leave the Londoners something to guess at.' More truly sensible counsel could scarcely have been given, and what serves to recommend it still more is the fact, plainly apparent in the correspondence, that the good wife was extremely anxious to get her husband soon and safely home again.

All these doings might be pleasant enough, but from

[1] Froude's *Life of Carlyle*, vol. ii. p. 234.

the very first Hogg's mind had misgiven him as to the success of that which had been his real object in coming to London. His forebodings were but too well justified, for after the publication of the first volume of the *Altrive Tales*—chiefly remarkable for the spirited *Adventures of Captain John Lochy*—the publisher, Cochrane, became insolvent. Here was the death-blow to all Hogg's recent hopes; and he had already had more than his share of similar experience. 'No author,' says indeed Professor Veitch, 'ever suffered more from this source than Hogg.' Even spirits so elastic as were his did not at once recover from the blow, and his health came to be affected. During this and the following year he produced no new work, and in a letter of this time to his friend Grieve he observes sadly that he feels that the best days of his writing are over.

Meantime he lacked sympathy neither at home nor at a distance. At home, the great London dinner in his honour was imitated or repeated at Peebles, under the presidency of his old ally and enemy Professor Wilson, many persons of distinction being present. In replying to the toast of his health, the Shepherd, who had a pretty turn for compliments, declared that, though he had sought Fame first among the mountains and afterwards in the city, it was not until that moment—when he saw so many notable men met together on his account—that he felt that he indeed had found her. He has been accused of vanity and of boasting, but his detractors must allow that, if his estimate of his own powers was high, he lived to see it endorsed, not only in the capital, but likewise in that very part of the country in which it is proverbially hardest for a prophet to obtain recognition. In April 1835 he received a letter from Sir Robert Peel which placed the Royal bounty at his disposal. In accepting it, for the benefit of his family, after a playful allusion to

his 'particular facility in accepting of money,' he speaks of himself as 'always poor and always most happy.'[1]

He had lived to realise his ambition, but the end was now not far off. In 1834 he produced his *Lay Sermons on Good Principles and Good Breeding*, and in spring of the next year two volumes of *Montrose Tales*—entrusted, as their predecessors had been, to Cochrane, and strange to say with no better fortune, though the Shepherd did not live to know this. His health had given some cause for anxiety, but on the 12th August, 1835, he was able to go as usual to the moors about Birkhill, at the head of Moffatdale, to shoot. After seeming for a time to have derived benefit from the change, he presently became worse, and by the end of October was confined to bed. His complaint—at first supposed to be jaundice—developed the symptoms of a serious affection of the liver, and from hence the progress of the disease was rapid. On the morning of the 17th November he became speechless, and at noon on the 21st he ceased to breathe. His remains were laid in Ettrick Churchyard, little more than a stone-cast from the humble cottage where he had first seen the light—the chill wintry wind playing about the mourners who followed the funeral, and lifting the leonine mane of Christopher North as he stood by the grave and wept. On the stone which marks the Shepherd's resting-place is carved the figure of a harp, whilst, to cover in the grave, daisied turf was fetched from a distance, so that in summer that one spot might stand out in flowery contrast to its green surroundings—an appropriate memorial of the pastoral singer who sleeps beneath. More ambitious memorials have, however, not been wanting. In the year 1860, at the head of St Mary's Loch, in presence of a great concourse of spectators, a statue of the Ettrick Shepherd—the work of the talented local sculptor, Andrew Currie—was

[1] Parker's *Sir Robert Peel*, vol. ii. pp. 309, 310.

unveiled: whilst in 1898, under the auspices of the Border Counties' Association, an obelisk with medallion portrait was erected at Ettrick-hall to mark Hogg's birthplace.

In person the Ettrick Shepherd in his maturer years is described as an 'excellent specimen of our stalwart Scottish peasantry.' His height was five feet ten and a half inches, and he has himself told how once when at some national gathering the chests of the company were measured, his own was found to be second only to that of Sir Walter Scott. His hair in later life became dark brown mixed with grey, his eyes were blue and lively, his complexion ruddy. In the portrait in Mr Blackwood's gallery, which represents him swathed in his plaid, he looks the very type of a 'wyce-like' Border farmer or shepherd, of shrewd and kindly disposition,—and that I think is exactly how a lover of his writings would wish him to have looked. The estimation in which he was held by his neighbours may be stated in the words of a correspondent [1] who gathered it from survivors among them, when he says that 'in the Forest all who knew him well respected him, and many loved him.' His widow survived him for the long period of thirty-five years.

It now only remains to sum up the achievement and the character of one of the sweetest of our national singers, one of the most robust and kindly figures in our literature. Hogg's songs lack the passion and rich humour of the best of Burns's; neither have they the pathos or the artistic finish of those of Lady Nairne. Yet the best among them —*When the kye comes hame*, or, inspired by the poet's Jacobite researches, *Cam' ye by Athol*, and *Flora MacDonald's Farewell*—have won and kept a place side by side with the above in the hearts and memories of the

[1] The well-known Border antiquary, Mr James Smail, late Secretary to the Commercial Bank, Edinburgh.

Scottish people. And this is a far surer and truer immortality than any to be conferred by critics or academies. On the other hand Hogg's epics, or metrical romances, have no structural inspiration, and are failures and forgotten. It is by the most popular of his songs, then, by two or three of the tales of *The Queen's Wake*, and by the best of the prose tales, that Hogg's name lives. In these prose tales he has incorporated the whole body of the floating popular mythology of Scotland—a fact which, should the day ever come when the stories fail to charm as stories, will still command for them the regard of students of history and folk-lore. That day at present seems far off —in token of which we may mention that we have before us the written testimony of the most popular of living Scottish novelists to the effect that, in Scottish literature, the Ettrick Shepherd's books are his most constant reading.

As others had been before him, Hogg has been severely assailed since his death, the most powerful among his assailants being Lockhart and the late Mrs Oliphant, from both of whom he has suffered by misrepresentation. For had he shown himself in society the overgrown *enfant terrible* described by Lockhart, is it likely, one may well ask, that he would have become and continued, I don't say the literary lion of Edinburgh and London, but a visitor at Floors, a favoured guest at Abbotsford and Bowhill? The object of a biographer is, however, rather to understand than to judge his subject; and, with this object in view, it appears to us that much light is thrown on Hogg's so-called weaknesses by the following passages from the *Memoirs* of one who knew him intimately. 'Be it here observed once for all,' says R. P. Gillies,[1] 'that the good Shepherd's vanity differed from that of all other authors,

[1] *Memoirs of a Literary Veteran*, vol. ii. p. 128. If Hogg was sometimes self-complacent, he was also often hard on his own works, and sometimes much too hard on them. 'I cannot take any hand in

inasmuch as it was avowed and undisguised, and he himself laughed at it objectively as such. It never for one instant appeared to me as arrogance or self-conceit; on the contrary it was mere native eccentricity, or, in better words, decision of character. He had great power and facility of composition after his own manner; was naturally conscious of this power and of course placed reliance on himself. As to Fortune's smiles or frowns he little needed to care.'

Mrs Oliphant's Steen-like picture of the Shepherd's interior at Altrive is evolved, not from documents, but from the authoress's inner consciousness, and, as so being, does not concern us. More to the purpose, however, is her estimate of Hogg's character, formed after an examination of a correspondence with his publisher which extended over many years.[1] Yet, here again, the good lady is at fault; for, having studied the Shepherd exclusively in his relations with Mr Blackwood, she has received an altogether one-sided and misleading impression. We have already acknowledged that his relations with the Blackwood coterie brought out the commoner side of his nature. Suppose, then, that we admit that in his dealings with his publishers generally, and in particular with Mr Blackwood—in many respects a kind and long-suffering friend to him—he did not on all occasions demean himself with perfect grace, or in perfect accordance with established custom, that he possessed in a peculiar degree the characteristic faults of the *genus* author—rated his own productions too high, and failed to understand why his books did not sell or his articles were rejected, laying the blame at other doors than his own,

. . . pushing the sale of my own works,' he writes to Blackwood, who wished him to come to Edinburgh. 'If delicacy even permitted it, I am the worst hand in the world to do such a thing.' *William Blackwood and His Sons*, vol. i. p. 325.

[1] See *William Blackwood and His Sons*, vol. i. chap. vii., 'The Ettrick Shepherd.'

that he 'dunned' for what was due to him or what he believed to be so, and in short was in many ways and in a high degree troublesome. Well, admitting all this, we are still bound in common fairness to remember that Hogg as an author was not 'to the manner born,' and that it was only in the nature of things that he should import into the book-market a little of the methods of the sheep-fair. Yet, supposing that he did do this, we are still inclined to believe that the balance of grievance remains upon his side. For what liberties had not been taken with him by his fellow-contributors to *Blackwood's Magazine*? The frëest use had been made of his name,[1] his signature had been abused, sentiments and verses not his own had been put into his mouth,[2] and lastly an article had been sent to press which was so 'shockingly offensive' in its tone regarding him that the very printer (James Ballantyne) risked his connexion with the magazine rather than set it up.[3] Verily there are two ways of looking at the question of rights and wrongs in this case!

Our point, however, is not so much to defend Hogg in his relation with his publisher as to show that anyone who attempts to judge him solely or chiefly from that point of view is quite incapable of doing him justice. For Hogg resembled his much greater contemporary, Scott, in this—that he was a man first, and afterwards a poet; and, if we wish to do him that justice which hitherto has been but scantly meted out to him, it is the man first and the poet afterwards that we must try to see. And, viewed in this way, how much more is he than the mere poet of the *Queen's Wake* and the *Forest Minstrel*! In the first place, he rises before us, as, by the common consent of

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 337. [2] P. 326.

[3] P. 338. The article was subsequently much modified; but it had reached the printer's hands in its original form. But for Ballantyne's protest, would it have been altered?

Gillies and Carlyle, a product of Nature at first-hand, a 'character.' 'At the risk of being blamed for truism or tautology,' writes the former of these authorities, 'I must say again that Hogg was a character *bien prononcé*, and in his way matchless'; and, after enumerating his works, the writer continues, 'yet after all these extraordinary performances, he remained in his demeanour, appearance, and manner of speech, *integer purus*, the same unalterable Ettrick Shepherd who, but a few years ago, had driven his herd of *nowte* to All Hallow Fair.'[1] Surely, amid the sickliness of so much of our modern civilization, a figure so essentially strong and self-reliant is one to cherish and be proud of. Its ruggedness, its angles, are an essential part of it—it would not be itself without them. And then, if we turn to contemplate obstacles overcome, the great legend of the 'pursuit of knowledge under difficulties'—a legend, as we venture to think, so particularly rich in Scotland—contains few stories more inspiring than Hogg's. And these stories are of the kind which gain greatly from the 'happy ending.' For, in all departments of life, it is only natural to salute the victor; and, though the Chattertons and David Grays may have aspired with equal generosity of feeling towards the light, we must allow its due of credit to the tougher fibre and the better balance which enabled Hogg to persevere until the goal was reached and the wreath wrested.

Cherish we, then, the memory of the man for what he was—whether we think of him as the youth who mused,

[1] *Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 243. James Glass Bertram, author of *Some Memories of Books, Authors, and Events*, who, as an apprentice in Tait's publishing-house, had many opportunities of hearing about Hogg from those who had known him, remarks (p. 49) that he was always spoken of in a kindly way, and that Lockhart's portrait of him was much resented. He quotes in particular one description of the Shepherd as 'a genial man with far more in him than ever came out.'

and shed the tears of sensibility, and conquered the difficulties of learning, alone, and scanted in sympathy as in comprehension, on the legendary muirs of Blackhouse; whether as the stalwart shepherd whose fleetness of foot would enable him to turn the fleeing flock on the hill-side, whose native and well-preserved vigour made him a champion at St Ronan's games when on the verge of three-score years; or as the marvellous boon-companion, prodigal of wit as of song and story, shouting, in his Homeric thirst after a night's carouse, to his old friend Tibby of St Mary's to 'bring in the loch'; or, again, as the contented farmer, rejoicing in his grey-hounds, his curling-stones, his silver punch-bowl, his country friends, his sister and his sweetheart; or as the hospitable host, pointing with pride to his 'bit house, full as a bee-skep o' happy leevin' creatures'; or as the self-made man-of-letters, walking with credit and circumspection alike amid the sloughs of failure and the pit-falls of success, winning and holding the love and respect of such a man as Walter Scott; or, lastly but not least, as the tuneful minstrel and cunning story-teller of the pastoral vales of Ettrick and Yarrow.

ROBERT TANNAHILL

TANNAHILL'S poetic reputation is secure; for, whatever the flaws or shortcomings of his songs, the fact stands that the Scottish people has taken them to its heart. And, so this be once done, there are few hearts more constant and loyal—few, we might add, slower to recognize imperfections in what they have made their own. It is possible that some sense of posthumous justice may have had its part in this adoption; and in that case he would be a churl rather than a critic who should seek to do it away.

Tannahill's brief life-history is as uneventful as it is unhappy. Born at Paisley on the 3rd June 1774, he was brought up to his father's craft of weaving. But his finer spirit introduced variations of its own into the mere mechanical plying of the shuttle. A poet and something of a musician, he kept a flute—it was a cracked one, bound with many plies of string—within reach of his loom, to which he had also fastened a desk, so as to be able to jot down ideas as they occurred to him without rising from his seat. In this manner, 'weaving threads and verses alternately,' he furnished new poems to many old airs which he had taken an interest in hunting up. And, thus diversified, his manual occupation, we are told, was not distasteful to him, so that when he came to be offered the post of overseer in a factory, he declined it, electing to remain where he was. This pursuit of the Muse in the midst of ruder avocations reminds one of the early studies of James Hogg. Meantime his songs were finding

singers, and he himself was used to assert that no token of fame had ever given him greater pleasure than the surprise, when walking alone, of hearing words of his own sung by a country girl in an adjoining field. In time he became acquainted with other persons of musical tastes—striking up, in particular, a warm intimacy with Robert Archibald Smith,[1] with whom it became his habit to spend most of his Saturday afternoons in rambles in the country. From Smith we learn that Tannahill's favourite walks were by the ruins of Stanley Castle, or over the Braes of Gleniffer, where, reclining on the heather, or seated on some bracken-fringed rock, he would resign himself to what was with him always the chief source of inspiration —the contemplation of Nature.

In 1807, he published his *Poems and Songs*, of which at least the latter became widely popular. Yet the author grew none the happier. For this, his circumstances were less to blame, probably, than his disposition. As a member of a large family, and one who would have been the last to repudiate the duties of filial piety, his means remained narrow notwithstanding the fact that the trade of Paisley flourished, and high wages could be earned there. His culture was meagre, and his experience of life—excepting for a journey he had made on foot into England, followed by a sojourn of two years at Bolton—was limited to that acquired in his native town. But worse than all this were the seeming contradictions which met in his character. For to an extremely retiring disposition, and a personality which in company was apt to be strangely unimpressive, he seems to have united an almost morbid craving for that recognition which, though

[1] Musical composer; born in 1779, and came to Paisley in 1800. He was the friend of Motherwell as well as of Tannahill, and it is to the information imparted by him to the former that we owe much of our knowledge of the weaver poet.

certainly due to his gifts, has often been withheld from much greater ones. 'Yes,' writes Motherwell, 'we scruple not to avow it that one main cause of Tannahill's premature fate was the chilling aspect of his own town. He had vanity like every man of genius—a thirst for fame, as every noble spirit ought to have; but the first was mortified, and the last was disappointed and ungratified. True, he heard his songs chaunted with delight, and his praises whispered in distant parts, but then not even hinted at in the place of his birth. Where was the countenance the higher ranks should have conferred on him? Where the support the wealthy could have given him to prosecute his studies and improve in his darling avocation?' Yet this was not the worst. His published volume of verse had drawn forth some sharp criticism—in certain respects, perhaps, not wholly undeserved, for it had been published prematurely. But the poet seems to have taken these strictures to heart, and his mortification was subsequently and successively deepened, first by the rejection of some of his songs which had been offered for the famous collection of George Thomson, and afterwards by Constable's declining his proposal for a second, or emended, volume of poems.

In these depressing circumstances the poet fell a prey to despondency, growing suspicious of his friends and exhibiting undue anxiety as to his poetic reputation. Certain dissipations into which he had been led by idle hunters of celebrity, though probably of a quite unimportant character, seem to have exercised an unhappy effect upon his sensitive mind as well as on his delicate body.[1] He produced some poems which are described as 'of most strange texture'; but of more consequence was his destruction, in a mood of self-despite, of his unpublished work, as well as of the emended copies of what he had already sent forth. He is even said to have sought to

[1] *Harp of Renfrewshire*, Introduction, p. xxxix.

recover for the same purpose those of his manuscripts which were in the hands of his friends.

At this sad juncture, an incident occurred which for the moment cheered him. The Ettrick Shepherd—not as yet the celebrated author of *The Queen's Wake*—travelled from Edinburgh to Paisley with the sole aim of seeing him. Let us narrate what followed in Hogg's own words. 'I supposed,' says he, 'that when I arrived in Paisley I had only to ask for Tannahill the poet, but to my astonishment nobody knew who he was. I was sent from one Tannahill to another, and many others, but none of them the object of my search. At last I found him on his loom, one of a long range; he was a swarthy man, bearing no external indication of the intellectual lava tide that slumbered in his soul. I told him my *nom de plume*, and I have never forgotten the look of absolute bewilderment with which he regarded me, as I told him how far I had come just to look upon him, and that now I was before him with the same feelings as when "Jonson sat in Drummond's classic shade." During the whole of that night we sat together, and he sang many of his choicest melodies. . . . In the morning, I was about to start by the coach for Glasgow on my way home. Being somewhat late, I required to run some distance. Tannahill ran by my side. When about to part, he grasped my hand convulsively, and burst into tears. I said, "Hoot, Robert, dinna tak' things so serious; we shall often meet again; and if you'll no come to Edinburgh to visit me, I'll come back to Paisley to see you." "No, Hogg," he replied, "this has been the proudest day of my life; but it cannot be . . ." and with this, sobs choked his utterance.'[1]

The poor poet was, in fact, in an overstrained state, from which, with his peculiar temperament, all things

[1] *Memorials of James Hogg*, pp. 306, 307.

were to be feared. Gloom now settled finally above his head. His countenance was pale, his form emaciated; his eyes sunk in his head. He intimated to his friends wild plans which he had formed for leaving Paisley, to take up his abode in 'some sequestered locality,' or for canvassing the country in person for subscriptions to a new issue of his poems. At last, during a visit to a friend at Glasgow, he complained of the 'insupportable misery of life,' and is said at the same time to have exhibited unequivocal symptoms of mental derangement. His friend thought it prudent to accompany him back to Paisley. On reaching home, Tannahill retired to bed, where he was visited by three of his brothers, who remained with him till about ten o'clock, when he appeared sufficiently calm. On returning to enquire for him two hours later, they found his bed empty. A search was at once made, which led to the discovery of the missing man's coat beside the conduit of a neighbouring brook, 'pointing out but too surely where his body was to be found.' The poet perished thus unhappily, by his own act, before he had quite completed his thirty-sixth year.

A man of Tannahill's temperament passes through life unknown even to his friends. Sometimes his work will reveal him to posterity, but in this case it was not so. All we can say of his character, then, is that, if somewhat wanting in the spirit of resistance, it appears to have been amiable and blameless. We know for certain that he was a devoted son to the old mother who survived him. What of his poems? It had been best to let them speak for themselves. His more ambitious efforts—his Odes for the celebration of Burns's birthday—are not without passages of vigour and felicity; yet it is by his songs alone that his name survives. In these it were easy to pick holes. They abuse the 'pathetic fallacy'; they are

disfigured by passages in the stiff Eighteenth-Century manner,—such passages as—

> 'There Avarice guides the bounding prow,
> Ambition courts promotion.'

And this manner, if defensible in the didactic poems of its own period, is, as we need not say, entirely out of place in a lyric. But, more than all, the songs lack variety. Indeed, though according to his light, the poet laboured at his craft with exemplary assiduity, it may almost be said that he knew but a single incentive to poetic production—the emotion aroused in his breast by the contemplation of Nature. For the love-interest of his songs is purely conventional, and though there are conflicting statements on this point, his friend Smith, who would be likely to know, assures us that even the Flower of Dunblane was 'quite an imaginary person.'

Admitting so much, however, there yet remains to the singer one of the finest motives for song, and from this he elicited a few brief strains of pure and authentic melody. *Gloomy Winter* and the *Flower o' Dunblane*, with the music to which they are sung, will live as long as the Scots tongue. Even in Scotland, too,—the land of local attachments—few localities have been more happily celebrated in song than the *Braes of Balquhither* or *Craigie Lee*. In *The Midges Dance* and *Langsyne beside the woodland burn*, the poet's innocent delight in birds and flowers is pleasingly expressed. In a livelier strain, *Pease Strae* and the rough serenade, *O are ye sleepin'*, are successful. But on the whole it is difficult to improve on Motherwell's estimate of the poet and his work. 'The sensibility of Tannahill,' says he, 'appears to have been greater than his genius, and his heart more susceptible of tender than deep feeling. On the whole, we believe his poetical character to have been over-rated,

and that sympathy for his fate has so associated itself in our minds with his many excellences, that while we endeavour to estimate his merits as a poet our feelings have more to say in the matter than our judgment. Be this as it may, his name will long be remembered with no ordinary degree of emotion, and it will be a long day ere another like him shall in these western parts sweep the Scottish lyre with so delicate and so artless a touch.'[1]

[1] *Harp of Renfrewshire*, Introduction, p. xlii.

WILLIAM MOTHERWELL

STRICTLY speaking, Motherwell is perhaps less a 'Famous Scot' than an interesting phenomenon in Scottish letters. A born literary man, an untiring experimenter in literary forms, a figure of real significance, if of minor importance, in the Romantic Movement which, inaugurated by Percy, Chatterton, and Walpole, reached its full height in Scott and Coleridge, his contribution to Scottish literature is in the general estimation probably limited to a single song; though we must hasten to add that, for the literary student, his work has an altogether different interest. Yet, after all, and taking the lower estimate, how many are the names of whom even this can be said? And let us not forget, either, that his talent was of a kind which by length of days might have been brought to a riper bearing. As it is, we may dismiss him quickly, for he had not, like William Thom, the advantage of a romantic personal story to compensate for the tenuity of his literary performance. His true history, like that of so many of his brother poets, would be one, not of deeds or of circumstances, but of thoughts, feelings, and studies.

Born in a house in the College Street of Glasgow, October 13th, 1797, William Motherwell was the third son of a father bearing the same names, who carried on business as an ironmonger. The family of the Motherwells was, however, an ancient one, and there is the evidence of charters, as well as of tradition, to show that its members both held land and filled the post of hereditary millers at Dundaff, on the banks of the Carron

in Stirlingshire, for, probably, not less than four hundred years. The name Motherwell, also spelled Moderville and Moderell, appears in the Ragman Rolls.

Mr Motherwell removing to Edinburgh, his son William was placed first, in 1805, at the school kept by a Mr Lennie in that town—where he remained for over three years—and afterwards at the High School. It was at the former seminary, and when in his eleventh year, that he met the little maiden who so strangely took and retained possession of his fancy. Jane Morrison is described as a gentle and pretty child of about his own age. Her hair was of a lightish brown, and her eyes dark, with a sweet expression. In winter (for it is well to be particular where one has the means) she wore a pelisse of pale blue, and a light-coloured beaver with a feather. She was the daughter of a respectable brewer and corn-factor of Alloa, and was come to Edinburgh to 'finish her education.' When Motherwell in his pathetic poem of *Jeanie Morrison* speaks of their being 'sindered young,' not to meet again, he merely states what was the fact. Jane, who in due course became the wife of a respectable merchant named Murdoch, is said to have retained her early attractiveness in maturity. Motherwell during his school-days is described as an apt scholar and an amiable and lively boy. It seems quite probable that Jeanie may have been his first and only love.

After a brief stay at the High School, the boy—whose father had not prospered in business—was handed over to the care of an uncle at Paisley, where, after attending the Grammar School until he was fifteen, he was placed in the office of the Sheriff-Clerk. Already he gave tokens of the romantic and mediæval bent which was to characterize him in later life, having as a schoolboy earned a reputation for his gift of spinning yarns about 'castles, robbers, and strange out-of-the-way adventures,' whilst he

now exhibited great skill in deciphering and making facsimiles of ancient legal documents, and would wile away the intervals of business by exercising his decided artistic ability in making sketches of knights in armour, on horseback or a-foot. His accomplishments, united with smartness and intelligence, attracted the notice of the Sheriff, and, in May 1819, when in the twenty-second year of his age, he was appointed Sheriff-Clerk Depute of Renfrewshire, a post which he held with credit for the next ten years. During this period he is described as of a kindly, enthusiastic, and somewhat convivial temperament, and, poet though he was, there is no sign that in his official life he occupied the position of the proverbial square peg in the round hole. His official career had not, however, been one of unbroken smoothness, for there is record of his being seized by an angry mob, whilst in the performance of duties which rendered him unpopular, and actually raised to the level of the parapet of a bridge over which it was intended to throw him. This was in 1818, during what was known in the West Country as the Radical War. Later on, the liberal emoluments of his office enabled him to indulge his tastes by forming a library.

What we are most concerned to know, however, is how in the meantime his pen had been occupied. His first writings which have been traced are contributions to a Greenock *Visitor*, dated 1818. In the next year *The Harp of Renfrewshire*—an anonymous publication, but known to have been brought out under his care—appeared at Paisley. It consists of a collection of local and other songs and poems, of which many are original, with notes and an Introductory Essay on the poets of the county, from Sir Hugh Montgomerie (d. 1545) to Tannahill. This volume was followed by the *Minstrelsy, Ancient and Modern*, published by Wylie of Glasgow in 1827—a work of permanent value in its own department. It is prefaced

by a careful and well-informed Historical Introduction, and, in the respect for antiquity which it exhibits, approaches more nearly to modern comparative methods than the work in the same kind of other writers of the period. Indeed Motherwell had a much more real feeling for the essential beauty of the old ballads than had most of his better known contemporaries, as the comparison of such a delicate piece of imitative work as his *Ettin o' Sillarwood* with the gross labours of, for instance, Leyden, will readily suffice to show. Among the men of literary distinction with whom the *Minstrelsy* brought Motherwell acquainted was Scott, who, in a letter[1] relating to *Gil Morrice*, frankly confesses to having done wrong 'in endeavouring to make the best possible set of an ancient ballad out of several copies obtained from different quarters'—a liberty, which, compared with those taken for instance by Cunningham, appears venial. Scott and Motherwell never met; but the latter, after Scott's death, made a pilgrimage to Abbotsford, and is said to have declared that nothing there affected him so much as Sir Walter's staff 'with the bit dibble at the end of it.'

In 1828 Motherwell took a principal share in starting the *Paisley Magazine*, to which several of his poems were contributed. He was now manifestly gravitating towards his true vocation of literature, and, having become a contributor to the recently started *Paisley Advertiser*, on the retirement of its editor, who was his intimate friend, in the same year, he was appointed to succeed him. This editorship he held—for a time, as would appear, conjointly with his legal office—until he was invited to Glasgow to undertake that of the *Glasgow Courier*—a position on which he entered February 2nd, 1830. His connexion with this journal was maintained until his premature death

[1] Quoted in *Memoir of Motherwell* prefixed to his *Poetical Works*, ed. 1881, p. xviii.

in November 1835. At first sight the change in his circumstances appears beneficial, but it remains very questionable whether for his best literary interests it really was so. A literary career was, indeed, that for which his temperament had marked him out; but the class of literature required by a newspaper demanding to be fed with the product of his brain three times a-week was not that for which he was best fitted. On the contrary: his mind worked slowly, his preference was for careful elaboration—in proof of which we may cite the statement that he worked upon the draft of *Jeanie Morrison* over a period of twenty years. Then, the times were against him. Political party-feeling waxed to an unprecedented height over the Reform Bill, and Motherwell—a Tory by conviction as well as by constitution—entered keenly into the war of opinions. We cannot wonder that his muse fell silent. In an account of a visit paid by him to Hogg's farm at this date, it is said that he 'affected to care for neither literature, nor sentimentalism, nor song,' his ambition being to shine as a wit and to talk politics.[1] Nevertheless it was during this period, in 1832, that his *Poems, Narrative and Lyrical*, were collected and published. Considering the perturbation of the time, and the merit of most of the poems was largely esoteric, their reception is said to have been on the whole favourable. A preface to Henderson's *Scottish Proverbs*, the humorous Memoirs of a Paisley Bailie, contributed to *The Day*, and a share with the Ettrick Shepherd in an edition of Burns, which Motherwell did not live to complete, make up the tale of his literary works.

Amid the bewilderment of the time, the poet had somehow been misled into joining the Orange Society, whose principles he embraced with warmth. In 1835, when Government contemplated to suppress that organization,

[1] *Memorials of the Ettrick Shepherd*, p. 302.

he was summoned to London to give evidence, touching its constitution and practices, before a Committee of the House of Commons. He was not by temperament fitted to acquit himself well on such an occasion, and it has been suggested that he was already the victim of premonitory symptoms of the disease known as 'softening of the brain.' At any rate he 'broke down' in his evidence. He was able, however, to return to Glasgow and resume the train of his everyday life. On the evening of the 31st October, whilst attending a party at the house of a friend, he was attacked by bleeding from the nose, which was followed, in the small hours of the next morning, by a shock of apoplexy, so violent as in a few hours to prove fatal. He was buried in the Necropolis, his death at the early age of thirty-eight being deplored by a large circle of friends and by the inhabitants of Glasgow generally.

In person Motherwell was of very short stature, but strong and well formed, and of features which, by differing standards, might be characterized either as ordinary or as comely. In attire he retained the scrupulous spruceness characteristic of his early employment. Except in the company of his more intimate friends, he spoke little, and, save in rare moments of enthusiasm, did not shine in conversation. But that he was no recluse or mere bookworm is shown by the fact of his having served at different times both in the Paisley Rifle Corps and the Renfrewshire Yeomanry, as well as by his possession of a taste for boxing and fencing, and even, in early days, for practical joking. In private life, he harboured one or two inoffensive eccentricities: for instance we are told that he believed firmly in ghosts, though not that he had ever seen one. In his reading he wisely preferred to follow up particular lines of his own, rather than to aim at the *banale* universality of the ordinary well-read man. Thus he deliberately neglected physical science, philosophy, and modern history.

In a word, his culture was that of the artist rather than the savant: he studied that for which he had affinity, to which he was capable of imparting life. But, of course, it is possible to carry this principle of study to the point where it begets prejudice, and it is possible that at some points he did not steer quite clear of this fault. His love of Scotland and of Scottish literature was ardent and enthusiastic.

We have said that Motherwell is a poet for literary men, and what need have these with ready-made criticism? For them, if not an impertinence, it is at least generally an encumbrance; so the briefer our observations on his poetry the better. In the first place, then, Motherwell is remarkable, almost unique it might be said, among modern Scottish minor poets, for this very characteristic —that he was a 'literary' poet, or one whose inspiration, if not drawn mainly from books, was at least much modified by study. So, in place of giving us the spontaneous carol of a Hogg or a Tannahill, he adapts his song to a carefully thought-out melodic scheme. And one point at which he gains over his compeers is that his work is of much more even quality than theirs: he wrote little or nothing that was worthless.

But we may go further than to say that he was a literary poet, and may add that, among literary poets, he was a *raffiné*—one curious as to form, apt to abandon each form in turn when he had mastered its secret. In this respect he may be ranked with the initiators. Thus, in *Jeanie Morrison*, he was the first, or one of the first, to write the Scots tongue, not intuitively, but deliberately and with linguistic research—thus starting a fashion which was long afterwards followed with success by Stevenson and 'Hugh Haliburton.' After this, taking his cue from Gray, he experimented in the, to our poets, still almost virgin ground of themes derived from Scandinavian mythology. The results which he obtained

have won the praises of connoisseurs in that domain. Then the rhapsody entitled *The Witches' Joys* shows a Gothic or Elizabethan luxuriance of fantasy akin to that of Beddoes; whilst with what success he tried his hand at the 'art ballad' has been already seen. But, indeed, the 'revival' side of the Romantic Movement in which he has his place is in him particularly strong. Several of his poems are even deliberately imitative of particular authors—as, for instance, the *Cavalier's Song* of Lovelace, *Melancholye* of Beaumont, *The Solemn Song of a Righteous Hearte* of Raleigh perhaps, or of the mournful lines written on the eve of execution by the young and misguided Chidiock Tichborne.[1] From all these things of course it follows, as the night the day, that the poet has no very distinctive style of his own. And hence perhaps arises the fact that, fine man-of-letters as he was, Motherwell has never yet been generally awarded his full dues of appreciation and applause.

Jeanie Morrison, by which he is generally known, and which is said to have been sketched by him at the age of fourteen, is a sweet and pathetic poem, telling of a childish love which lasts a life-time. Its sentiment may perhaps appear a little strained; yet the school-children who

> '. . . on the knowe abune the burn
> For hours thegither sat,
> In the silentness o' joy, till baith
> Wi' very gladness grat,'

were obviously children of very exceptional sensibility of temperament—exceptional, but not necessarily unnatural; and it is with the exceptional that the romantic poet delights to deal. Another way of looking at the poem is to view the poet's love for the little girl as the form into which the natural yearning backward toward a happy childhood has been crystallized by time.

[1] 'My prime of youth is but a frost of cares,' etc.

WILLIAM THOM

'O YE Cairngorms,' cries Lord Cockburn, in his *Circuit Journeys*,[1] 'how have ye never produced a poet of your own?' Of course the accomplished lawyer does not here speak strictly by the book;[2] still the poetical poverty of Aberdeenshire, compared with certain districts of the West and South of Scotland, is certainly noticeable. And scarcely less noticeable is the fact that the subject of the following sketch, an Aberdonian by birth, is in all other respects alien to his county. His dialect, learnt from books, is 'pure Tannahill and Dundee';[3] nor, in all his verse, is there an allusion to Aberdeen.

In the ranks of the ill-fated among men of genius, William Thom holds a conspicuous place. For that he had a spark of genius—though perhaps not strictly *poetic* genius—there

[1] P. 337.

[2] Alexander Ross, author of *The Fortunate Shepherdess*, and of the song of *Woo'd and married and a'*; John Skinner, author of *Tullochgorum* and several other popular songs; John Ewen, author of *The Boatie Rows*, and George Halket, generally credited with the authorship of *Logie o' Buchan*, are alone enough to redeem the county from the charge of poetical barrenness. Nor, in more recent times, must we overlook the veteran Dr George MacDonald.

[3] The author is indebted to Mr W. Keith Leask for drawing his attention to this curious fact. The same gentleman points out that, in the verses quoted on p. 147, there occur no less than five words—viz. 'ettle,' 'lo'esome,' 'hallan,' 'cranreuch,' 'aiblins'—which are quite foreign to Aberdonians.

is little room to doubt. An obscure Aberdonian weaver, labouring under every possible disadvantage of birth and up-bringing, he yet succeeded in so impressing the world that, whilst literary London hailed him as a 'second Burns,' India vied with the United States in contributing towards his maintenance. The means by which this impression was produced were the wit and eloquence of his conversation, the beauty of his flute-playing and singing, the charm of his lyric verse, and the pathos of his history. To-day, his wit, his music, his personality are lost. His verse remains; but in that verse the spark of genius that was in him shone with no steady, unobstructed ray. His story likewise remains to us, and, as has been hinted, it is one of the most cruelly ironical in the annals of literature. For it is that of one whose inherent weakness was betrayed, not by the long-continued assaults of adverse fortune, but in the tardy hour of the turning of her wheel.

Thom was born in Sinclair's Close, Justice Port of Aberdeen, as nearly as can be ascertained about the end of 1798, or the beginning of the year following,[1] though the date mistakenly given in *Whistle-binkie* and on the poet's grave-stone is ten years earlier. A lameness from which he suffered through life, and which was due originally to a deformed foot, had been aggravated by his being run over, whilst still a child, by the carriage of the Earl of Errol, whilst attending the local race-meeting. For the injury thus inflicted he is said to have been 'compensated' with the sum of five shillings; but the story lacks inherent probability, and at any rate it seems only fair to assume that the extent of the damage done was unknown to the owner of the carriage. Thom the elder, who has been variously described as a 'contractor'

[1] *Life*, prefixed to *Rhymes and Recollections of a Handloom Weaver*, ed. 1880.

and a 'merchant,' died soon after the birth of his son, leaving his widow in very poor circumstances. Hence the entire education of the future poet was acquired in a dame's school of the very humblest description,—to which he tells us that boys of five years old and upwards brought the weekly fee of 'three bawbees and a peat.' Of the mistress of this seminary, and the customs of the place, he has left some lively sketches. 'Our Wifie,' he writes, 'had always twenty scholars, one cat, one *taurds*, and one opinion. The scholars exercised her patience, the cat her affections, and the opinion [was] simply that the *taurds* (a cordovan improvement on the feebler birch) was, as an exercise, the best panacea on earth for rheumatism in the right shoulder. . . . The outfit for grown-up *students* was a Bible, a Westminster Catechism, and a stool, all of which were removed on Saturday, and fetched again on Monday. Oh, that I could tell, and tell it rightly, the "skailing of the squeel!" or paint yon joyous little mob, gushing forth from the *laigh* door of Elspet Gillespie! Every face a commentary on the "rights of man"—every little head crowned with a three-footed stool, its "cap of liberty."' The great day of the year was Candlemas, when each little lad and lass—no matter how shabby on ordinary days—wore a clean sark or a white frock, and carried a white pocket-napkin. A king and queen were appointed by the schoolmistress, and as it was customary to present her with a guerdon, on the occasion, it was observed that her choice usually fell on children of a butcher or a baker. Then 'two tea-spoonfuls of sweeties and an orange were laid on every happy hand. The fiddler comes—all on foot a once—all at once in motion—twenty white napkins flutter over twenty pretty heads. Fiddler! what care they for a fiddle? They *see* the fiddle! The dance started when he began to tune—the dance continues—he is tuning still—hands up! Patter, patter,

patter,—forty little feet pattering! Think of that when ye see the hail dance to the *whirr* of a May shower! Oh, the days of childhood! Voyage hereafter as we may, on smooth or on broken water, these are the landmarks that will never fade.'

For Thom these simply happy days were of short continuance. At the age of ten he was apprenticed to a firm of cotton-manufacturers, with whom he remained for four years, entering in 1814 a large weaving factory, known as the School Hill Factory, which occupied the site of the present East and West Free Kirks. Melancholy, indeed, is his account of the years he passed within the 'dismal walls' of that 'prime nursery of vice and sorrow' of the days of unreformed factories; where, in his own words, virtue perished once and for all, or was only remembered in a sense of deep and woeful self-abasement. Here between three and four hundred male and female workers toiled promiscuously—'the distinctive character of all sunk away,' the men becoming less manly, the women unlovely and rude. With these, mixed the dregs of humanity, for, when hands were wanted, no character was deemed too coarse to take part in the work. Thom was unfortunate even in the period of his admission to the establishment, which took place during a cycle of lean years, when wages which had recently ruled as high as forty shillings for four days' work had fallen to six shillings for a week. And, indeed, during the seventeen years which he spent in the factory, he tells us that the average earnings of first-rate hands, in good times and bad, did not exceed from six to nine shillings.[1] There was, however, a brighter, or at least a more lively, side to the picture; for the editor of *Whistle-binkie*,

[1] It is only fair to say that Thom has been charged with exaggeration in this picture, the truth of which was disputed on the publication of the *Recollections*.

writing in somewhat Anacreontic strain, speaks of Thom's striking and early-developed 'gift of the gab,' which stood him in good stead, not only in getting out of scrapes, but in the more serious business of sweetheart-ing. In the latter, it seems to have rendered him well-nigh irresistible, so that, though he was a man of little stature and plain though expressive features, it is claimed for him that he made more 'conquests' than the best. His talents in singing and flute-playing contributed also to distinguish him from his fellows. He also loved poetry, in which taste he was not alone, reading Scott and Byron with his fellows. But 'nearer and dearer' to hearts like theirs, he tells us, was the Ettrick Shepherd, then in his full tide of song and story. 'But nearer and dearer still than he,' he continues, 'or any living songster—to us dearer—was our ill-fated fellow-craftsman, Tannahill, who had just then taken himself from a neglecting world, while yet that world waxed mellow in his lay. What we owe to thee! Your *Braes o' Balquidder*, and *Yon Burnside*, and *Gloomy Winter*, and the *Minstrel's* wailing ditty, and the noble *Gleniffer*. Oh, how they did ring above the rattling of a hundred shuttles! Let me again proclaim the debt we owe the Song Spirits, as they walked in melody from loom to loom, ministering to the low-hearted.' Praise as eloquent as it is generous, and such as any poet worthy the name must set high above gold or place! From earliest youth, Thom himself had experienced an 'irrepressible tendency to make rhymes,' but it was not until his thirtieth year that he ventured to submit one of his effusions to an editor. He has left an amusing account of the anxiety with which he awaited the result, in company with a friend, outside the office of the *Aberdeen Journal*. Too poor to purchase a copy of the newspaper, and being refused a sight of it by successive

passers-by, he was at last compelled to have recourse to the expedient of a forced loan from the person of a boy —when he found, with extravagant delight, that his contribution had been inserted.

In 1828 Thom married, and three years later settled with his wife in Dundee. But, for some reason not specified, his wife soon after this left him, and returned to Aberdeen. Thom on his part removed to Newtyle, a manufacturing village which had recently sprung up near Cupar Angus. There he formed a new connexion—with the girl named Jean whom he has celebrated in his verse, who, throwing in her lot with his, in time bore him five children. The alliance was of course irregular, and as such is open to censure; yet it was by no means without redeeming features. The evidence before us shows the poet as at all times a most affectionate parent, and throughout the eight or nine years which passed before Jean's death, he seems to have made her a faithful and loving mate. In fairness to his memory, too, we must bear in mind that it was in those days no easy matter for a poor man to obtain a divorce, so that, though certainly irregular, his conduct must be acquitted of any charge of profligacy.

He was still living, and working as a weaver, at Newtyle, when, in the spring of 1837, a great commercial crisis in America combined with other causes to silence, in one week, upwards of 6000 looms in Dundee and its dependencies alone, and to spread dismay throughout the whole county of Forfar. Thom found the resources on which he had to support six lives reduced to five shillings a week. And, furthermore, as a stranger in the village, he was regarded with prejudice rather than sympathy, so much so, in fact, that most of those who had been incomers with him, and whose circumstances permitted them to do so, made haste to withdraw from the place. But, with four young children depending on him, this

was not easy for Thom. And here I make no apology for transcribing largely from his own *Recollections* of this time. For those *Recollections* are not only admirably told, but as literature are worth all the poetry that came from his pen put together.

'Imagine a cold spring forenoon. It is eleven o'clock, but our little dwelling shows none of the signs of that time of day. The four children are still asleep. There is a bed-cover hung before the window, to keep all within as much like night as possible; and the mother sits beside the beds of her children, to lull them back to sleep whenever any shows an inclination to awake. For this there is a cause, for our weekly five shillings have not come as expected, and the only food in the house consists of a handful of oatmeal saved from the supper of last night. Our fuel is also exhausted. My wife and I were conversing in sunken whispers about making an attempt to cook the handful of meal, when the youngest child awoke beyond its mother's power to hush it again to sleep, and then fell a-whimpering, and finally broke out in a steady scream, rendering it impossible any longer to keep the rest in a state of unconsciousness. Face after face sprang up, each with one consent exclaiming, "Oh, mither, mither, gie me a piece!" How weak a word is sorrow to apply to the feelings of myself and wife during the remainder of that dreary forenoon!'

The family lingered on in the hope and expectation of warmer weather, until strength rapidly declining warned them to be moving. Having then pawned a last relic of better days for the sum of ten shillings, Thom invested four of these in the purchase of a pack for his wife, and as many in second-hand books to form a stock of merchandize for himself; and thus equipped, they set out to travel the country. It was a Thursday when they left home—turning the key in the door of the cottage, where

the weaver's two looms with some furniture were left behind.

'On the third day, Saturday, we passed through the village of Inchture, in the Carse of Gowrie, and proceeded towards Kinnaird. Sunset was followed by cold sour east winds, and rain. The children becoming weary and fretful, we made frequent inquiries of other forlorn-looking beings whom we met, to ascertain which farm-town in the vicinity was likely to afford us quarters. Jean was sorely exhausted, bearing an infant constantly at her breast, and often carrying the youngest boy also, who had fairly broken down in the course of the day. It was nine o'clock when we approached the large and comfortable steading of Balguay, standing about a quarter of a mile off the road. Leaving my poor flock on the wayside, I pushed down the path to the farm-house, with considerable confidence, for I had been informed that Balguay (meaning, by this local appellation, the farmer) was a humane man, who never turned the wanderer away from his door. Unfortunately for us, the worthy farmer (Playfair) was from home, and not expected to return that night. His housekeeper had admitted several poor people already, and could admit no more. I pleaded with her the infancy of my family, the lateness of the night, and their utter unfitness to proceed—that we sought nothing but shelter—that the meanest shed would be a blessing. Heaven's mercy was never more earnestly pleaded for than was a night's lodging by me on that occasion; but, "No, no, no," was the unvarying answer to all my entreaties.

'I returned to my family; they had crept closer together, and all, except the mother, were fast asleep.

'"Oh, Willie, Willie! what keepit ye?" inquired the trembling woman. "I'm dootfu' o' Jeanie," she added; 'isna she waesome like? Let's in frae the cauld!"

'"We've nae way to gang, lass," said I, "whate'er come o' us. Yon folk winna hae us."

'Few more words passed. I drew her mantle over the wet and chilled sleepers, and sat down beside them. My head throbbed with pain, and for a time became the tenement of thoughts I would not now reveal. . . . The gloamin' light was scarcely sufficient to allow me to write a note, which I carried to a stately mansion hard by. It was to entreat what we had been denied at Balguay. This application was also fruitless. The servant had been ordered to take in no such notes, and he could not break through the rule. On rejoining my little group, my heart lightened at the presence of a serving-man, who at that moment came near, and who, observing our wretchedness, could not pass without endeavouring to succour us. The kind words of this *worthy peasant* sunk deep into our hearts. I do not know his name, but never can I forget him. Assisted by him, we arrived, about eleven o'clock, at the farm-house of John Cooper, West-town of Kinnaird, where we were immediately admitted. The accommodation, we were told, was poor; but what an alternative from the storm-beaten wayside! The servants were not yet in bed, and we were permitted a short time to warm ourselves at the bothy fire. During this interval the infant seemed to revive; it fastened heartily to the breast, and soon fell asleep. We were next led to an out-house. A man stood by with a lantern, while, with straw and blankets, we made a pretty fair bed. In less than half-an-hour, the whole slept sweetly in their dark and almost roofless dormitory.

'I think it must have been between three and four o'clock when Jean wakened me. Oh, that scream!—I think I can hear it now. The other children, startled from sleep, joined in frightful wail over their *dead sister*. Our poor Jeanie had, unobserved by us, sunk during the night under the effects of the exposure of the preceding evening, following, as it did, a long course of hardship,

too great to be borne by a young frame. Such a visitation could only be sustained by one hardened to misery and wearied of existence. I sat a while and looked on them; comfort I had none to give—none to take; I spake not—what could be said—words? Oh, no! the worst is over when words can serve us. And yet it is not just when the wound is given that pain is felt.' Than the above perhaps no sadder story was ever told, no more piteous experience ever placed on record. On reading it, one has no choice but to throw to the winds all thought of literature, and give one's self up to sheer poignant human sympathy. The effect is thus the same as in the triumphs of literature; yet, of course, the cause is not the same. But, keeping this in view, how manly, simple, and straightforward is the writer's tone—how free from any suspicion of an attempt to 'pile up the agony,' or appeal *ad misericordiam;* how free also from the lachrymose note which spoils the effect of the most popular poems of Moir and Motherwell! Surely none who has once read it will ever again pass a houseless family of 'tramps' upon the road without thinking of Thom—and thinking, let us hope, to some purpose. Judged as a mere piece of composition, the passage quoted has very high merits. But, indeed, the author's prose shows, throughout, a gift of free and forcible expression, which is by no means so conspicuous in his verse. Says he, after his sorrow, 'The busy singing world above us was a nuisance; and around, the loaded fields bore nothing for us—we were things apart. Nor knew we where that night our couch might be, or where, to-morrow, our grave.' And again, this harsh truth, 'In common tramp-houses, a death is, in a double sense, a godsend—such, indeed, is to them a gracious notice, even when it comes in a "fair strae" kind of way [*i.e.* not by foul means]. But if the decease has aught about it of the extraordinary, so as to attract

local sympathy, out of that comes a true Christmas.' And again, 'It is always so: but for the poor, the poorer would perish.'

One wishes that it were possible here to follow Thom step by step in his wanderings, for every line of this part of his narrative is worthy to be graven in brass, first for the strength of its appeal to the heart, and secondly for the graphic traits of 'tramp' life noted by the keen eye of the little weaver, and herein embodied. After having, with all sympathy from the people of the place, consigned his little one to earth, on the Monday morning he set out once more—wandering onward with his flock, without settled aim or purpose. Gratefully he acknowledges the kindness of strangers to his children, though shrewdly suspecting that, to some extent, it might be due to the respectability of their dress. One night, at a tramp lodging-house at Methven, he found himself a half-penny short of the landlady's dues, which she was accustomed rigorously to exact before permitting her lodgers to remove their boots—a euphemism in the case of many, who had no boots to remove. He had recently observed a street singer—one evidently not to the manner born—and his flute now occurred to him as a possible means of raising funds. But there was some natural unwillingness to be overcome before setting to work. Having gone outside the town, and awaited the darkening, he dipt his flute into a streamlet and began to play, advancing townwards as he did so. The 'Flowers of the Forest'[1] soon drew listeners to the windows, and within ten minutes he held the sum of three and ninepence. His strathspey-playing, for which he acknowledges that he had a turn, was not much less successful, and when he returned to his lodging it was not only with exchequer replenished, but bearing

[1] Specially popular in the north at this time through the singing of John Wilson, the baritone.

gifts as well. Well might he apostrophize in one of his sweetest lyrics the instrument which had been his friend in need!

'It's nae to harp, to lyre, nor lute,
I ettle now to sing;
To thee alane, my lo'esome flute,
This hamely strain I bring!
Oh! let us flee on memory's wing,
O'er twice ten winters flee,
An' try ance mair that ae sweet spring
Whilk young love breathed in thee.

'Since then, my bairns hae danced to thee,
To thee my Jean has sung;
And mony a nicht, wi' guiltless glee,
Our hearty hallan rung.
But noo, wi' hardship worn and stung,
I'll roam the warld about;
For her and for our friendless young,
Come forth, my faithful flute!

'Your artless notes may win the ear
That wadna hear me speak;
And for your sake that pity spare,
My full heart couldna seek.
And whan the winter's cranreuch bleak
Drives houseless bodies in,
We'll aiblins get the ingle-cheek,
A' for your lichtsome din.'

His success notwithstanding, Thom was glad, as soon as opportunity offered, to relinquish flute-playing and similar precarious means of earning a livelihood, and to settle again, as a 'customary' or household weaver, first at Aberdeen, and subsequently at Inverurie in the same county. When he had been at the latter place a year, and when things had begun to go hardly with him again, he sent the first part of his poem entitled *The Blind Boy's Pranks* to the

Aberdeen Herald, where it was inserted, over the signature 'A Serf,' with a sympathetic note by the editor, to whom Thom was an entire stranger. The lyric has more of substance or body, and is more carefully elaborated, than is the case with most of Thom's verse, but its merits, apart from the circumstances of the author's history, would scarcely suffice at the present day to attract attention. In 1841 it was otherwise. The poem, as we are told, was copied into most of the newspapers in the country. In this manner it attracted the eye of Mr Gordon of Knockespock, a local landowner of literary and antiquarian tastes, who forthwith sent the author £5, and soon afterwards, having furnished him with an outfit, carried him and his little girl to London. The faithful much-enduring Jean had died in childbed a few months too soon to witness the dawn of her partner's good fortune.

There is no doubt that Knockespock's conduct was actuated by amiable enthusiasm, and sincere goodwill towards Thom—to whom, during the remaining seven years of the poet's life, he continued a true friend. But, when judged by the light of after events, the wisdom of the course here adopted by him remains very open to question. The little weaver stayed in London four months, being fêted and lionized, and introduced to most of the literary celebrities of the day. He also accompanied a party, of which Samuel Lover was one, on a tour in Wales. When he returned to his loom at Inverurie, though he was now a personage and received many orders from rich patrons, he was in reality none the better for the outing. He had grown unsettled, as, in similar circumstances, Burns had done before him, and the temptations of his position became too much for him. It is of the Thom of this period that Professor Masson has left his classical description.

'The first occasion of my seeing him,' writes the Pro-

fessor, 'was a kind of public dinner or supper (I forget which) given in his honour at the Royal Hotel [at Aberdeen] by a number of the most respectable townsmen. He was neatly dressed, in a peculiarly cut blue coat with bright buttons, and home-made check waistcoat, as a weaver of the old times of good weaving might have been attired on a holiday. As he moved about on his first coming in, a tight, small figure, with short light hair, one noted the slight lameness of his gait, but most of all his face—which was creased and wrinkled all over wherever a wrinkle could be, and had an expression at once shrewd, humorous, insinuating, and woe-begone. Nothing could be easier or in more perfect tact than his manner: and in the little speeches he made from his place at table we had a specimen of a power which some who knew him best afterwards have told me he possessed consciously in a wonderful degree, especially with women—that of fluent, happy, and most persuasive talk. "What a tongue the creature had!" is the phrase in which one who knew him very intimately has conveyed to me his impression of this power of Thom's; "if he had your ear for five minutes he charmed you." He certainly, on this occasion, even before a considerable audience, spoke admirably and readily.'

Professor Masson saw him afterwards, more quietly, at his little weaving-place in Inverurie, 'where there was a tall, dark, sensible-looking man acting as his assistant at the loom, and evidently exercising a tender and admiring care over him.' But the three or four years—from spring of 1841 to the end of 1844—during which he now made Inverurie his head-quarters, were not to his advantage. The old and baneful alliance of Scots Song with Scots Drink was hurtful to him. The traditional example of Burns had recently been brought out in stronger colours by the amazing success of the roistering *Noctes* of North; there was in Aberdeen a considerable element of 'tavern-

conviviality, streaked with uncultivated literary enthusiasm and imitative ambition,' to which these misleading papers had given birth, and on occasion of Thom's visits to that city there were friends of his who were ever ready to waylay the coach and carry him off into their company. Oh, those admiring drouthy friends to Scottish genius! for how much waste and wreck of talent, time and character are they responsible! We who write have seen it with our eyes. Friends, indeed? Call them, rather, the basest, most callously selfish, most insidious of foes. We can well believe that in North and his doings Thom took little real interest, and that, excepting a kind of 'official' perfunctory participation in the Chartism which at the time was in the air, he cared for politics not at all. A Scots song, a strathspey on the flute, and in conversation the unsought humours and suggestions of the moment, were for the couthy, companionable little body enjoyment enough. What concerns us most here is the fact that, after all the bright encouragement he had received, he should not have applied himself with more of vigour and effect to the work of self-education, and to literary composition.

In autumn, 1844, he published the only book that ever came from his pen—his *Rhymes and Recollections of a Handloom Weaver*, the first thousand copies of which were soon disposed of. Towards the end of the year he returned to London, being actuated by various motives, amongst which the more immediate was to superintend a new edition of his book, whilst a scheme of trading in Scottish home-made fabrics, such as he had himself been in the habit of producing, also entered into his programme. It was on the occasion of this sojourn in London that his planet reached its apogee. His fame had by this time spread far and wide, and at home and abroad people vied with one another in doing him honour. It may be

unwise, at this distance of time, to assign the motive which influenced them to this generous emulation, but, unless instinct be at fault, it was the artless and irresistible appeal of the *Recollections* far more than the not very remarkable poetry of the *Rhymes*. Be this as it may, on the 26th February 1845, a great dinner in the poet's honour was given at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand, at which W. J. Fox, the then celebrated preacher, philanthropist, and anti-Corn-Law League orator presided, and many speeches were made. This entertainment was followed by a complimentary soirée given to Thom by the working-men of London, whilst, in the meantime, enthusiastic Scotsmen in India had sent him £300, and a subscription for his benefit headed by Margaret Fuller in America reached the sum of £400. Thom was now flattered and caressed, fêted by the 'Gorgeous' Lady Blessington, and sought after, as we are told, by the literary stars of the time—though, among those mentioned—Dickens, William and Mary Howitt, Douglas Jerrold, John Forster, Mr and Mrs S. C. Hall and Eliza Cook—it is noticeable that several are of very low magnitude.

But the scene was not long in changing. In the natural course of things, the wave of applause and recognition spent itself; probably, as is apt to be the case, it had been from the first overdone. Doubtless the poet's conduct served also to alienate certain of his friends—among grounds of offence being his indifference to the formality of obtaining a divorce before establishing a new domestic connection. Meantime his affairs were not prospering—his scheme for trading in Scotch woven fabrics having proved visionary, whilst, through no fault of his own, the London edition of his poems was delayed till 1847, when the demand for it had passed away.

Neglected, spoilt by the caprice of fortune, and with failing health, Thom's last state became far worse than his

first. Yet still his old imposing cleverness would from time to time assert itself. Thus we are told how, walking out along the New Road from his lodgings near King's Cross, as he was fond of doing in an evening, he would sometimes join the group assembled round, it might be an argumentative cabman or his dishonest 'fare,' and feigning to enter into the spirit of the thing, would soon by his wit and volubility raise shouts of laughter among the bystanders. Many traits in his character, indeed, would incline one to believe that it was for a comedian rather than a poet that Nature had designed him. His course was, however, almost run, and his dominant mood at this time is expressed in his *Farewell to London*. A grant from the Literary Fund, assisted by a subscription among his friends, enabled him to gratify his wish of returning with his family to Dundee, where he took up his abode in the suburb of Hawkhill, in a couple of rooms. There disease and penury further depressed his failing powers, and after few and evil days he died there on the 29th February 1848. His remains, which were honoured with a public funeral, were laid in the Western Cemetery of Dundee, which overlooks the 'queenly Tay,' and in 1857 a monument was erected over them. A public subscription was raised for the benefit of his consort and her children.

The irony of the ill-judged enthusiasm which saluted in Thom 'Scotland's second Burns' is to-day too sadly apparent to require pointing out, and serves but to add one more to the already innumerable instances of the fallibility of the general public in matters of literary criticism. The poem of the *Mitherless Bairn*, by which alone he is now remembered, gives expression to the genuine tenderness and sympathy with suffering humanity that were in the man; whilst, as a moving record of personal experience, his prose *Recollections* remain, as has been said, as full of human interest to-day as on the

day when they were written. The rest, alas! is silence, or nearly so, for 'local patriotism' may yet suffice to keep the poet's memory green within the district of his birth and up-bringing. To the few beyond that region who may still care to trace out his history, he will remain a genial and pathetic figure, born to strange vicissitude of fortune. For his lot was a hard one, cast in evil times. And yet it was success that undid him. For it is scarcely too much to say that he fell a victim to the desire on the part of his countrymen to make vicarious reparation to the greatest of Scottish poets.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS ON THE "FAMOUS SCOTS" SERIES.

Of THOMAS CARLYLE, by H. C. MACPHERSON,

The *Literary World* says :—

"One of the very best little books on Carlyle yet written, far out-weighing in value some more pretentious works with which we are familiar."

Of ALLAN RAMSAY, by OLIPHANT SMEATON,

The *Scotsman* says :—

"It is not a patchwork picture, but one in which the writer, taking genuine interest in his subject, and bestowing conscientious pains on his task, has his materials well in hand, and has used them to produce a portrait that is both life-like and well balanced."

Of HUGH MILLER, by W. KEITH LEASK,

The *Expository Times* says :—

"It is a right good book and a right true biography. . . . There is a very fine sense of Hugh Miller's greatness as a man and a Scotsman; there is also a fine choice of language in making it ours."

Of JOHN KNOX, by A. TAYLOR INNES,

Mr Hay Fleming in the *Bookman* says :—

"A masterly delineation of those stirring times in Scotland, and of that famous Scot who helped so much to shape them."

Of ROBERT BURNS, by GABRIEL SETOUN,

The *New Age* says :—

"It is the best thing on Burns we have yet had, almost as good as Carlyle's Essay and the pamphlet published by Dr Nichol of Glasgow."

Of THE BALLADISTS, by JOHN GEDDIE,

The *Spectator* says :—

"The author has certainly made a contribution of remarkable value to the literary history of Scotland. We do not know of a book in which the subject has been treated with deeper sympathy or out of a fuller knowledge."

Of RICHARD CAMERON, by Professor HERKLESS,

The *Dundee Courier* says :—

"In selecting Professor Herkless to prepare this addition to the 'Famous Scots Series' of books, the publishers have made an excellent choice. The vigorous, manly style adopted is exactly suited to the subject, and Richard Cameron is presented to the reader in a manner as interesting as it is impressive. . . . Professor Herkless has done remarkably well, and the portrait he has so cleverly delineated of one of Scotland's most cherished heroes is one that will never fade."

Of SIR JAMES YOUNG SIMPSON, by EVE BLANTYRE SIMPSON,

The *Daily Chronicle* says :—

"It is indeed long since we have read such a charmingly-written biography as this little Life of the most typical and 'Famous Scot' that his countrymen have been proud of since the time of Sir Walter. . . . There is not a dull, irrelevant, or superfluous page in all Miss Simpson's booklet, and she has performed the biographer's chief duty—that of selection—with consummate skill and judgment."

Of THOMAS CHALMERS, by W. GARDEN BLAIKIE,

The *Spectator* says :—

"The most notable feature of Professor Blaikie's book—and none could be more commendable—is its perfect balance and proportion. In other words, justice is done equally to the private and to the public life of Chalmers, if possible greater justice than has been done by Mrs Oliphant."

Of JAMES BOSWELL, by W. KEITH LEASK,

The *Morning Leader* says :—

"Mr W. K. Leask has approached the biographer of Johnson in the only possible way by which a really interesting book could have been arrived at—by way of the open mind. . . . The defence of Boswell in the concluding chapter of his delightful study is one of the finest and most convincing passages that have recently appeared in the field of British biography."

Of TOBIAS SMOLLETT, by OLIPHANT SMEATON,

The *Weekly Scotsman* says :—

"The book is written in a crisp and lively style. . . . The picture of the great novelist is complete and lifelike. Not only does Mr Smeaton give a scholarly sketch and estimate of Smollett's literary career, he constantly keeps the reader in conscious touch and sympathy with his personality, and produces a portrait of the man as a man which is not likely to be readily forgotten."

Of FLETCHER OF SALTOUN, by W. G. T. OMOND,

The *Leeds Mercury* says :—

"Unmistakably the most interesting and complete story of the life of Fletcher of Saltoun that has yet appeared. Mr Omond has had many facilities placed at his disposal, and of these he has made excellent use."

Of THE BLACKWOOD GROUP, by Sir GEORGE DOUGLAS,

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"It need not be said that to everyone interested in the literature of the first half of the century, and especially to every Scotsman so interested, 'The Blackwood Group' is a phrase abounding in promise. And really Sir George Douglas fulfils the promise he tacitly makes in his title. He is intimately acquainted not only with the books of the different members of the 'group,' but also with their environment, social and otherwise. Besides, he writes with sympathy as well as knowledge."

Of NORMAN MACLEOD, by JOHN WELLWOOD,

The *Star* says :—

"A worthy addition to the 'Famous Scots Series' is that of Norman Macleod, the renowned minister of the Barony in Glasgow, and a man as typical of everything generous and broadminded in the State Church in Scotland as Thomas Guthrie was in the Free Churches. The biography is the work of John Wellwood, who has approached it with proper appreciation of the robustness of the subject."

Of SIR WALTER SCOTT, by GEORGE SAINTSBURY,

The *Pall Mall Gazette* says :—

"Mr Saintsbury's miniature is a gem of its kind. . . . Mr Saintsbury's critique of the Waverley Novels will, I venture to think, despite all that has been written upon them, discover fresh beauties for their admirers."

Of KIRKCALDY OF GRANGE, by LOUIS A. BARBÉ.

The *Scotsman* says :—

"Mr Barbé's sketch sticks close to the facts of his life, and these are sought out from the best sources and are arranged with much judgment, and on the whole with an impartial mind."

Of ROBERT FERGUSSON, by Dr A. B. GROSART,

The *Westminster Gazette* says :—

"One of the most interesting of the Famous Scots Series is devoted to 'Robert Fergusson' the poet, to whom 'the greater Robert,' as he freely acknowledged, was under so many obligations. Dr Grosart is perhaps the best living authority on all that relates to the bard of 'The Farmer's Ingle,' and he gives many new facts and corrects a number of erroneous statements that have hitherto obtained currency respecting him. We have read it with genuine pleasure."

Of JAMES THOMSON, by WILLIAM BAYNE,

The *Daily News* says :—

"A just appreciation of Thomson as poet and dramatist, and an interesting record of the conditions under which he rose to fame, as also of his friendships with the great ones of the eighteenth century."

Of MUNGO PARK, by T. BANKS MACLACHLAN,

The *Leeds Mercury* says :—

"We owe to Mr Maclachlan not only a charming life-story, if at times a pathetic one, but a vivid chapter in the romance of Africa. Geography has no more wonderful tale than that dealing with the unravelling of the mystery of the Niger."

The *Speaker* says :—

"Mr Maclachlan recounts with incisive vigour the story of Mungo Park's heroic wanderings and the services which he rendered to geographical research."

Of DAVID HUME, by HENRY CALDERWOOD,

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"To the many students of philosophy in Scotland a special interest will attach to Professor Calderwood's sketch of David Hume from the fact that it is the last piece of work done by its lamented author; and very pleasing it is to note the fairness and charity of the judgment passed by the most evangelical of philosophers upon the man who used to be denounced as the prophet of infidelity."

Of WILLIAM DUNBAR, by OLIPHANT SMEATON,

The *Speaker* says :—

"Mr Smeaton looks narrowly into the characteristics of Dunbar's genius, and does well to insist on the almost Shakespearian range of his gifts. He contends that in elegy, as well as in satire and allegory, Dunbar's place in English literature is amongst the great masters of the craft of letters."

The *Glasgow Herald* says :—

"This is a bright and picturesquely written monograph, presenting in readable form the results of the critical research undertaken by Laing, Schipper, and the other scholars who during the present century have done so much for the elucidation of the greatest of our early Scottish poets."

Of SIR WILLIAM WALLACE, by Professor MURISON,

The *Speaker* says :—

"Mr Murison is to be congratulated on this little book. After much hard and discriminative labour he has pieced together by far the best, one might say the only rational and coherent, account of Wallace that exists."

Mr William Wallace in the *Academy* says :—

"Professor Murison has acquitted himself of his task like a patriot."

"Capital reading."

The *Daily News* says :—

"A scholarly and impartial little volume, one of the best yet published in the 'Famous Scots Series.'"

The *Pall Mall Gazette* says :—

"Another of this admirable collection of biographical studies has appeared. It is a well written narrative of the few authenticated facts known about the popular hero of Scotland, Sir William Wallace, its production having been preceded by a diligent study of such documents as have been rendered procurable by text clubs and historical societies in the north. So far the book would be acceptable to all. It, however, contains something else. History is dumb about many of the years of the hero's life; but legend and romance have found utterance in minstrelsy, and with Blind Harry's epic to draw upon, what more could perfervid Scots wish for? Professor Murison has incorporated such a quantity of the minstrel's incredible tales in his book that it is scarcely likely to prove delectable fare for any but his compatriots. It is a bright little book which will be much relished north of the Tweed and also among those Scottish exiles who are supposed to be pining away their lives south of it."

The *New Age* says :—

"Anyhow, here at least, we have his life-story—a most difficult tale to tell—recorded with a painstaking research and in a spirit of appreciative candour which leave almost nothing to be desired."

Of ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, by MARGARET MOYES BLACK,

The *Banffshire Journal* says :—

"The portrait drawn as it is by a loving hand, is absolutely photographic in its likeness, and the literary criticisms with which the book is pleasantly studded are alike careful and judicious, and with most of them the ordinary reader will cordially agree."

The *Bookman* says :—

"This little book is sure to get a welcome."

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The *Outlook* says :—

"Certainly one of the most charming biographies we have ever come across. The writer has style, sympathy, distinction, and understanding. We were loth to put the book aside. Its one fault is that it is too short."

The *Daily Free Press* says :—

"One of the most charming sketches—it is scarcely a biography—of a literary man that could be found has just been published as the latest number of the 'Famous Scots Series'—'R. Louis Stevenson,' by Miss Black. The excellence of the little book lies in its artless charm, in its loose and easy style, in its author's evident love and delight in her subject."

Of THOMAS REID, by Professor CAMPBELL FRASER,

The *North British Daily Mail* says :—

"A model of sympathetic appreciation and of succinct and lucid exposition."

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"We do not know any volume of the 'Famous Scots Series' that deserves or is likely to receive a heartier welcome from the educated public than this life and estimate of Reid by Professor Campbell Fraser. The writer is no amateur but a past-master in the subject of the Scottish philosophy, and it has evidently been a real pleasure to him to expiscate quite a number of new facts regarding the professional and private life of its best representative."

Of POLLOK AND AYTOUN, by ROSALINE MASSON,

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"One of the most artistically conceived and gracefully written of the series to which it belongs."

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"The facts of the two lives are presented by Miss Masson with intelligence and spirit, and the volume will take a good place among the rest of the series."

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"Very sympathetic is this life of Pollok, and it is well that his name should not be allowed to sink into oblivion. Miss Masson's sketch of Aytoun is a charming one, and fully maintains the high standard of the series to which it belongs."

Of ADAM SMITH, by HECTOR C. MACPHERSON,

The *Speaker* says :—

"This little book is written with brains and a degree of courage which is in keeping with its convictions. It has vision, too, and that counts for righteousness, if anywhere, in political economy."

The *Echo* says :—

"Smith's life is briefly and clearly told, and there is a good deal of independent criticism interspersed amidst the chapters on the philosopher's two principal treatises. Mr Macpherson's analysis of Smith's economic teaching makes excellent reading."

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Of JAMES FREDERICK FERRIER, by E. S. HALDANE,

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"Ferrier the man, and even Ferrier the professor, Miss Haldane brings near to us, an attractive and interesting figure."

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Of KING ROBERT THE BRUCE, by Professor MURISON,

The *Morning Leader* says :—

"Professor Murison has given us a book for which not only Scots, but every man who can appreciate a record of great days worthily told, will be grateful."

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